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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

EDITED BY
JAMES HASTINGS, D.D.

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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

JAMES HASTINGS, D.D.

EDITOR OF
'THE EXPOSITORY TIMES,' 'THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE'
'THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS'
AND OTHER WORKS

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THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

VOLUME II

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The aim of THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE is to preserve all that is worth preserving of the modern interpretation of the Bible. It is the thought rather than the expression that is retained, though the expression has not been rejected when it seemed worthy. So much, however, has been done in the way of condensing, re-arranging, re-writing, adding to, and illustrating, that the sources have not as a rule been given. But so far as these are published sermons, they will be found in the Index to Modern Sermons which accompanies each volume. THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE contains also much that is new, written by the Editor and others.

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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM

Acts xv. 10, 11.—'Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.'

CHURCH Councils are in these days shorn of their glory, and the ancient creeds, once so venerable, are now but lightly esteemed. Many seem to regard them as due to the baleful influence of ecclesiastics who went to work and wantonly compiled a mass of theological subtleties which have obscured the Gospel and turned the Church away from the simplicity that is in Christ. But in reality their origin was very different. They took shape in a very natural and necessary way, under the pressure of some practical difficulty. Teachers arose from time to time saying, 'This is how we understand the Gospel, this is what is to be believed concerning Christ and His salvation'; others said, 'Not so.' It fell to the Church, therefore, as an obvious duty to utter her mind. She had to define the truth in order to defend it. And as time went on, in order to exclude the subtleties of error, she had to carry her definitions to an extreme point of refinement. But always at the root of it lay some practical problem of faith or morals which cried aloud for solution.

It was a practical problem of this sort which led to the first Christian Council in Jerusalem. The Jews had hitherto composed the bulk of the Church; the Gentiles were as yet an inconsiderable minority, recently gathered in. In Antioch, however, they were numerically strong, and here the problem arose. Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, professing to speak with the authority of the Apostles, taught that it was necessary for the Gentiles to keep all the Law of Moses. St Paul at once saw how momentous was the issue thus raised. It was nothing less than the sufficiency of grace and the freedom of the Gospel. If this teaching were to prevail, Christianity from being a world-wide religion would sink to the level of a Jewish sect. He resolved, therefore, to carry the matter to Jerusalem and get an authoritative pronouncement from the Mother Church.

The Council met, and its decision was a complete vindication of the Pauline Gospel. Peter, through whose ministry the first Gentile had been brought to Christ, led the discussion, while the formal motion was made by James, the Lord's brother, the revered head of the Church in Jerusalem and the strictest of Jews. Whatever may have been the secret scruples and misgivings of certain Jewish Christians, the findings of the Council were unanimous. These findings may be summarized under three heads. First, the creed of the Church was defined in terms of grace. Second, the ceremonial Law was declared to be non-essential, indeed an intolerable yoke. Third, certain rules were laid down as being necessary to maintain harmony and brotherhood within the Church.

An old Latin writer has aptly expressed the Christian spirit in its attitude to questions of faith and morals by saying that we must preserve 'in things essential, unity; in things not essential, liberty; in all things, charity' (*in necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas*). It will be seen that the Council of Jerusalem struck with a firm and sure hand these three great notes of Unity, Liberty, Charity, and by so doing set the ideal of faith and practice before the Church for all time.

I

UNITY

In necessariis unitas. There was one thing, as St Peter asserts, about which all were agreed, Jew and Gentile alike. Fortunately it was the one essential, namely this, that 'through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved.' Nobody in the Apostolic Church denied

that, nobody doubted it, there was no controversy over it in any quarter, it could be taken for granted. Here, then, is the essential Christian creed in its briefest and simplest form. It is a declaration of grace, not of law. It asserts, not that man must do something, but that God in Christ has done something. It expresses a conviction of the truth of John iii. 16. Or it might be put in Paul's great words, that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.' This creed it is which constitutes the Church. The Church is formed by the union of those who hold this creed, and the Church exists to publish it. It should be observed that this creed is never spoken of in the New Testament as a dogma, that is, a conviction to be held, but is spoken of as a *κήρυγμα*, that is, a conviction to be preached. It is a Word of God which is committed to the Church, a thing to be uttered. The Word created the Church; the Church lives by her experimental knowledge of a Divine fact, and finds her *raison d'être* in proclaiming it. Here is the centre of unity to which all true believers rally.

Of course it was inevitable that this essential Christian creed, brief and simple in its terms but profound and comprehensive in its contents, should in process of time require expansion and elucidation. Questions arose, as they were bound to arise, profound questions concerning the person and work of the Saviour. These questions the Church must needs face and answer under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, bringing to bear on them the best intellect at her command, and seeking amid the imperfection of human language the fittest terms in which to utter the Divine truth. Hence arose the historic creeds. They were not only a legitimate development but a religious necessity. Couched in the language of a bygone age they may be unintelligible to the casual reader, but the serious student finds that the men who made them were not disputing about trifles but were zealously building outworks to defend the central citadel. The Church in framing them was always contending for some essential element in that faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. And so it was that Christian men sang these ancient creeds, lived by them, and died for them. Let them have the honour which is their due. 'When the Church had to encounter early Gnosticism in mortal strife could she have come out of it alive in any other way than she did? Did her theological course then not save the future of Europe, civilization, and freedom? Did not the same course continued save it when the Athanasian Creed was the battle hymn to which the Moors were beaten back at Roncevalles? It was that Creed which saved the West from Islam.' [1]

At the same time the danger was not slight, nor perhaps was it sufficiently guarded against, that amid all this controversy and play of intellect and elaboration of doctrines the Gospel should be overlaid and its essential simplicity obscured. It was, doubtless, also inevitable that when divisions occurred the points of difference should be magnified and the essential unity forgotten. So we behold the Church of modern times divided, distracted, speaking in a babel of voices which confuse the seeking soul and provide a rare excuse for unbelief. Even so notable a Christian as Abraham Lincoln declined to join himself to any branch of the Church, but he said, 'When any church will inscribe over its altar as its sole qualification for membership the Saviour's condensed statement of both law and Gospel, "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbour as thyself," that church will I join with all my heart and soul.'

It is to the credit of the Deists that, wearied of doctrinal divisions, they sought, with whatever measure of success, to win back to the essential unity. Hobbes declared that 'the (*unum necessarium*) Onely Article of Faith, which the Scripture maketh simply Necessary to Salvation, is this, that JESUS IS THE CHRIST. . . . The Gospel that Paul and the other Apostles preached was onely this Article. . . . This is therefore the Fundamental Article of Christian Faith.' [2] 'This idea of the Unum Necessarium is the main thesis of Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity*, which was an effort to find a creed which everybody could accept, and by which all men might be saved.' [3] But the storm of the Reformation was too recent and controversy too acute for such counsels of peace to prevail. It is, however, one of the most hopeful features of our time that the tide of Christian thought has been

[1] P. T. Forsyth, *Theology in Church and State*, 100.
[2] *Leviathan*, xliii. 3.
[3] Chaplin, *The Effects of the Reformation*, 112.

setting strongly in the direction of unity, and it is coming to be realized that Church unity can only be based on apostolic simplicity of creed. Nearly forty years ago Marcus Dods preached a sermon in St Giles' Cathedral on 'What is a Christian,' in which he sought to show that essential Christianity is simple faith in Christ. A man may be a Christian though his views of Christ's person may be defective, though he may not know much or clearly about Christ's work, and may find himself quite unable to believe a great deal that is generally identified with Christian doctrine.[1] This, though it raised at the time the cry of heresy, was a truly Christian pronouncement. It was an endeavour to return to the primitive apostolic creed. Another distinguished thinker of our time has offered as a brief but sufficient creed, 'I believe in God through Jesus His only Son, our Lord and Saviour.'[2] Whatever may be thought of that particular form of words, there is to-day a widespread conviction that the Church must get back to a simple creed, some utterance of her Divine message which can be easily understood, heartily believed in, preached with conviction and joyfully sung.

This movement is entirely different from the attitude of those who make an outcry against all creeds and dogmas. That outcry is really foolish and unthinking, for not the Church only but all forms of human knowledge must of necessity have their dogmas, without which systematic thought would be impossible. No, we seek to simplify the creed, not to minimize it but the more effectively to preach it. In proportion as we concentrate on the essential we seek to gain in intensity of conviction. There is a Divine something which makes a man a Christian and binds the true Church into one. Dig deep enough and it will be found in all the Churches, however thickly overlaid by doctrines and ritual. Let that Divine something be unearthed and shown to the world. Let it be held with conviction and preached by the Church universal with one unanimous voice, and, be sure, the Kingdom of God on earth will be mightily advanced.

[1] M. Dods, *What is a Christian?* 11.
[2] J. Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 398.

II

LIBERTY

In dubiis libertas. The Jewish Christians of the early Church, while cordially accepting the creed of grace, were bent on adding a tremendous *plus* of legalism. A man, they said, is saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ plus the keeping of the Mosaic Law. Not so, said the Apostle Paul; grace alone is sufficient for salvation. With this St Peter agreed, even going so far as to say that the Law had been a yoke which neither their fathers nor they were able to bear. Accordingly the Council decreed that the Mosaic Law, not being essential to salvation, was not to be imposed on Gentile converts. By this decree the Church formally renounced legalism and declared the all-sufficiency of grace.

Had the Church been able to maintain this spiritual level how different would the course of her history have been. That, perhaps, was hardly to be expected in view of the innate tendency to legalism in the human mind. Good men persist in thinking that morality is impossible without legal supervision. The legalists were silenced in the Council of Jerusalem, but they never understood Paul's Gospel of grace, and they opposed it bitterly, and no doubt conscientiously, to the end. This spirit has never ceased to be active throughout the whole history of the Church. Men have continually risen up with the best of intentions, saying, 'unless you observe this, believe this, do this, you cannot be saved.' And so they have laid a yoke, often an intolerable yoke, upon the neck of the disciples. Clever men among the Greeks rose up and said, 'Simple faith is good so far as it goes, but for a full salvation you must have intellectual knowledge of subtleties.' Ascetics made salvation depend on the practice of all manner of austerities. Throughout the Middle Ages the spirit of legalism flourished till the simple creed of grace was forgotten and Christendom groaned under a heavy yoke of penances and ritual observances. The Reformation was in its first movement a breaking of that yoke and a joyous restatement of the sufficiency of grace. But again the spirit of legalism appeared, and the Puritan matched the Romanist in the multiplicity of his laws and the strictness of his observances.

In all this the legalists have unwittingly perverted the Gospel, making that to be sin which is not sin, requiring for salvation what Christ has not required, and forbidding what He has not forbidden. The effect has been to alter the whole aspect of the Gospel, making it to appear as law to be obeyed rather than as grace to be accepted, bringing it down upon the world like the thunders of Sinai rather than as the dew of Hermon. In such guise it is shorn of its winsomeness and becomes repellent. Warneck tells of the indignant repulse of an Indian missionary who had been preaching the Law to awaken among Hindus a sense of sin. 'We have a religion which makes great demands on us in money, cattle, sacrifices, mortifications, fasts, prayers, washings, pilgrimages. We meet all these demands. We have a king who imposes taxes on us. We do all that he asks. We have a government which saddles us with policemen and police arrangements. We groan and bear it all. And now you come with frightful demands which put all the others in the shade.'[1] Many, it is to be feared, besides that burdened Hindu, have grossly misconceived the Gospel, and many of the young especially have been alienated from it.

Are there, then, no laws governing the Christian? It would seem, the legalists argue, that free grace is in conflict with morality. St Paul met this challenge with an overwhelming reply. By grace the slave of sin is delivered, and it is unthinkable that he who has tasted of liberty should return to bondage. By grace we become dead unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 'How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?' (Rom. vi. 2). Laws are needed for hired servants, but a son has his father's will at heart. The union through grace of the Redeemer and the redeemed is like the marriage bond, where all duty is sublimated into a joyous ministry of love, where law is never thought of because it is more than fulfilled. By such arguments St Paul maintained the all-sufficiency of grace because he had found in his own experience that grace is living and morally powerful, while law is dead. Grace will, of its own accord, bring forth all manner of fruits of righteousness. It can only be cramped and fettered by laws. Let a man loose at the Cross and the impulses of grace will be his guide. This was what Augustine meant when he said so daringly, 'Love God and do what you like.' You only cage the lark when you set about him the iron bands of law. Free grace has done more for morality than all that law ever did, simply because, in Luther's paradox, while the Christian man is the freest of all and servant of none, he freely takes on him the yoke of Christ and becomes the servant of all.

[1] J. Warneck, *The Living Forces of the Gospel*, 155 f.

III

CHARITY

In omnibus caritas. There remains the question of the Church. Were each Christian an isolated unit then it might suffice simply to declare his freedom to follow the impulses of grace. But Christians are united in one body, the Church, in which they must learn to live and work in harmony. Now every society has its necessary rules. No social order, even the most primitive, is possible except under rules which limit individual liberty in things which might otherwise be lawful. So is it in the Church, where unity is vital.

The immediate problem before the Apostles was the uniting of Jew and Gentile within the Church. They came together with different ideas and different social customs. It was obvious that if anything in these customs was offensive to the sensibilities of men on either side it ought in charity to be given up. Accordingly the Council laid down certain 'necessary things' to be observed by the Gentiles. These dealt with customs which, though not immoral, were abhorrent to the Jews. The one exception is 'fornication,' which, however, in this connection probably refers to loose marriage customs, in which the Gentiles as yet saw no harm. In the interests of brotherhood and harmony within the Church the Gentiles were asked to conform to Jewish ways.

Such rules of charity are obviously variable, to be adapted to the circumstances of place and time. Here they were suggested by the fact that the majority of the Church was at that time Jewish. Where the Jewish element was not present these rules fell into abeyance. Similarly St Paul lays down the rule that a woman is not to speak in the Church. The

reason for this rule was that in those days only women of loose life made themselves heard in public. The virtuous wife among the Greeks was a keeper at home, and unless Christian women conformed to this ideal they would undoubtedly earn for the Church a bad name. Now, in a different age, this rule no longer holds, as the Apostle would doubtless be the first to acknowledge were he to appear among us.

The essential point in all such rules is that no offence be given to a brother, no stumbling block put in his way, nothing done to endanger Christian unity. The law of charity must be supreme. Even the weak and the ignorant must be made at home in the Church, and their sensibilities most tenderly considered. St Paul gives a masterly exposition of all this both in his letters and in his own practice. It is a Christian duty to 'give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God' (1 Cor. x. 32). 'When ye so sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Cor. viii. 12, 13).

Well would it be for the Church if this spirit everywhere prevailed. Particularly in our time is there need for this spirit to be more largely manifested. For the tendency of to-day is to involve the Church in all manner of social activities, many of which seem to lie beyond the sphere of her Divine commission. Earnest members of the Church try to commit the Church to their particular policy. Worldly minded members bring into the Church practices in regard to which Christian opinion is divided. Hence arise disputes among brethren and censorious judgments, consciences are wounded, and the peace of the Church is broken.

It cannot be too clearly understood that there are things which a private Christian may lawfully do, which the Church cannot do. The corporate action of the Church must inevitably be far more circumscribed than the action of any individual. The Church, which is the body of Christ, exists for the promotion of His Kingdom. In comparison with that Divine end all private preferences and practices are but as dust in the balance. To the spirit of charity it must seem no less than an outrage that any bone of contention should be wantonly cast into the midst of the brotherhood, that, for the sake of any worldly policy or social custom or even idle amusement, the harmony of Christ's Church should be broken and a shadow brought upon the face of even the least of His brethren. The realm of Christian liberty is wide, but its boundaries are firmly drawn by love, nor will true liberty ever desire to overpass these boundaries and wander uncontrolled. The unity of the Church is vital to her effectiveness. Therefore everything must be done that can lawfully be done, and every concession must willingly be made, so that we may all live within the Church in harmony, and give ourselves without distraction to the work of God.

J. H. Morrison.

Taking the Hazard

Acts xv. 25, 26.—'Our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

In many ways it would be difficult to find two men more unlike than Barnabas and Paul, and yet they both gambled with their lives and put them in hazard in their fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not surprising to have this news concerning the Apostle Paul. For Paul was a born fighter. Where is there a record of any antagonist appearing where we find Paul nervously sulking away to his tent? The way of difficulty was always his favourite road. He loved the battle and the breeze. He revelled in close grips with stern wrestlers, and that day was always most welcome that promised a struggle from which he could extort the prize of victory.

But Barnabas was a very different type of man. He was more a man of the fireside. He was gentle, companionable, kind. He was pastoral where Paul was militant. He was the son of consolation, while Paul was a man of war. He was a peacemaker, and he was great in the ministry of reconciliation. It was the difference between Jonathan and David, between John and Peter, between Ridley and Latimer, between Gordon and Kitchener. And yet we are told that Barnabas also, the man of pacific virtues, the man who was clothed in softer and more retiring moods, heard the trumpet call of

the hour, and hazarded his life for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Now, what was it that prompted them to take the hazard? It was the name of the Lord Jesus. They spoke of the name where the name carried their fate. Our circumstances are now so different that we have deliberately to enlist the imagination and the historic sense to create the scene, and to give reality and life to the record. We can proclaim the name of the Lord Jesus anywhere, and the name is our security rather than our offence. The fact of the matter is that in Britain the name of Jesus has no religious rival, and when we 'hail the power of Jesu's name,' there is no contendent for His throne. Merely to declare the name of Christ in our day does not in any way recall the circumstances of the Early Church.

Take an example. When Paul went to Ephesus to proclaim the name of Jesus there was another name there before him. 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!' There was a rival on the field. The rival was mighty and predominant. And for anyone to go into the city of Ephesus and stand up in some public square, and proclaim, 'Great is Jesus of Nazareth,' was to carry his life in his hands, to arouse the enmity of rivalry, to stir the fires of pride and prejudice, and to enlist against himself all the fiercest hatreds of religious passion. If we would know what he had to face we must recreate and recall the use of phrases like 'Pro-Boer,' or 'Pro-German,' or 'Anti-Patriotic,' or 'Anti-Loyalist,' or any other circumstance where some hoary and accepted tradition has opened the armoury of its terrors, and marched against anyone who has questioned its right and authority. In such remembrance we shall recover something of the mood and temperature of those early days.

It is just here that we may see the intervening years between the Apostles' day and ours melt away, and we may feel the essential kinship between Ephesus and London. There is now little or no hazard in proclaiming the name of Jesus. There is no Diana within our shores to awaken battle. But loyalty to the name of Jesus is as provocative in our day as it was nineteen hundred years ago. There may be no exalted, tinselled monarch who is jealous of our fine gold, but we cannot maintain our loyalty to Christ without facing the menace of Mammon, or the irritation of Fashion, or the heavy inertia of Tradition, or the sleepless antagonism of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. The way of Christian loyalty is on that road, the road of open venture. And the all-determining question is this, How far will we go in our religious devotion? How much will we hazard for Christ? Paul and Barnabas hazarded their *lives* for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For, after all, the real test of the value of our religion is found in the stake which we are willing to wager in the name of our Lord. In one of his books Donald Hankey has a very arresting phrase. It is this: 'True religion is betting one's life that there is a God.' Notice the nature of the bet. You don't bet your word that there is a God. You don't bet ten minutes or a quarter of an hour a day that there is a God. You don't hazard threepence a week that there is a God. You bet your life on it. Donald Hankey's phrase is very arresting, and very quickening, but there is not enough life and colour in it. How would the Apostle Paul recast and remint the phrase? Most assuredly he would so remould it as to make room for Christ. Perhaps he might refashion it after this manner: 'The true Christian religion is betting one's life that Jesus is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, and hazarding everything for the honour of His friendship.' At any rate, however we may phrase the form of the venture, vital religion implies the element of hazard, of speculation, of splendid gamble, and that where there is no risk the so-called venture is dead.

Well, if that be so, we have a ready measure for testing the reality and value of our faith. What do we hazard for it? The measure of the hazard reveals the vitality of our faith, and nothing else reveals it. It is not revealed by our controversial ardour. It is not revealed by our stern guardianship of orthodox spoils. It is not revealed by the scrupulous regularity of our attendance at church and worship. No, all these may mean nothing at all. What do we hazard for Christ? What have we staked on the venture?

¶ Albert Schweitzer closes his famous book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, with these words: 'He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lake-side, He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: "Follow thou Me!" and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfil for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is.'

Not long after the writer of these words himself heard the call to follow Jesus. At once he set about to equip himself as a doctor: he resigned his post as organist to the Paris Bach Society; he gave up his Chair at Strassburg; he turned his back upon Europe, and ever since has been fighting leprosy and sleeping sickness at his lonely forest post in Equatorial Africa.[1]

2. Now the New Testament teaches that the heart of faith is venture. In the eleventh chapter of the letter to the Hebrews, that wonderful chapter where the heroes and heroines of faith are honoured and commemorated, every instance reveals a vista of venture. In one instance a man is venturously putting himself at the head of a mass movement of his fellow-countrymen, and is leading them out of age-long bondage. In another instance a woman puts a bit of scarlet thread in a window, and risks her life in the venture. The roads are very different, but they are all alike in the display of a common venture. And therefore we may say, on the authority of the Word of God, that there is no true faith without venture.

¶ What is it that has kept the story of Robinson Crusoe so fresh through its two hundred years? What makes the story so typically and essentially English? Is it not just the sheer romance of every life that trusts a ship to the waters and its soul to God? When Defoe gave his hero a Bible, and made him discover the need and power of prayer, he struck a note that rings true in the sea-loving, adventure-seeking, God-fearing heart of England. A character like Crusoe puts salt into life by reminding us that there must be an element of venture in every soul that would sail uncharted seas. God dearly loves the man who will take a risk.[1]

Look at it from another angle for a moment. Let us ask this question, What faculties are involved in the work of faith? Reason? Surely. Conscience? Yes, surely. Imagination? Yes. Emotion? Yes, and no; possibly, but not necessarily. We may have faith without emotion, as some bulbs open out their hidden glory without water, absorbing from the atmosphere the scanty moisture which they need. We may have all these other faculties at work, and yet there may be no splendid ventures of movement in the life. In those shining records in the letter to the Hebrews we see not only reason in logical movement, and conscience surveying larger moral issues, and imagination scanning the outlines of new worlds, and emotion expressing itself in penitential word and tears, we see more than these. In the faith of these men and women it is *life* itself that is moving, and it is moving in glorious hazard and venture. Reason is there, and conscience, and imagination, but all these are vitalized by the vitalizing companionship of the will, and it is the will moving in venturesome journeys. If we have reason, and conscience, and imagination without the will, it is like having three finely upholstered railway carriages, but no engine. Add the engine, and the whole is in movement, and we can go to the ends of the earth! Reason, conscience, imagination—now add will, a venturesome will! It is in the valorous movement of the will, staking everything upon her venture, that life is displayed in the vitality and regality of faith. Without hazard there is no faith.

Have you lifted anchor and hoisted sail?
  Does your ship stand out to sea?
Have you scoffed at peril and dared the gale
  When the waves and the wind are free?

Is safety a thought that you count disgrace
  When duty and danger call?
Would you stand on the deck with a smile on your face
  And perish the first of all?

[1] Hubert L. Simpson, *Altars of Earth*, 152.

[1] George Jackson.

Oh, the Sea of Faith hath storms, God knows,
And the haven is very far;
But he is my brother-in-blood who goes
With his eye on the polar star.[1]

3. A religion without hazard is a religion which makes no discoveries. Nothing ventured, nothing won! That is the teaching of the world on other roads of experience. It is also the teaching of the Word of God. Our hazards are methods of exploration, and they are the measures of our findings. No stakes, no winnings! What sort of gains? Read what Jesus Christ says about them. Read what the Apostle Paul says about them. You may possibly remain as poor as a struggling village carpenter, but you will assuredly share the riches of the Son of God.

But there is something even better than that. In the common sort of gambling no one grows richer except the winner. But where a man or woman hazards their life on the Christ everybody shares their gains. All men are better when any man sides with God. He sweetens the world for everybody else. Every noble venture brings Heaven into the common road and makes it fragrant with the perfume of Divine truth and grace.

Silas

Acts xv. 40.—'And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.'

1. Before he met with Paul, Silas had 'proved his soul.' Certain men who came from Jerusalem had brought a disturbing element into the Church at Antioch. To the consternation of the Gentile believers, their message was, 'Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses ye cannot be saved.'

As Paul and Barnabas in their missionary journey had received Jews and Gentiles into the Church on equal terms it was necessary that this question should be definitely settled. The gospel preached by Paul had nothing to do with the Law or with circumcision. It was determined that they both, with certain others, should go up to Jerusalem to discuss the question. There Paul gained his point, and made a friend.

The decision of the Council was embodied in a formal letter as the definite judgment of the Mother Church. The letter, a wonderful document, brief and tactful, was addressed to the Gentile brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, and it was sent not by the hands of Barnabas and Paul—it is conceivable that their opponents and critics might have said it was a pure concoction if Barnabas and Paul had brought it—but by the hands of two of the leading members of the Jerusalem Church. And these two leading members of the Jerusalem Church who were chosen to carry this all-important letter were Judas and Silas. This is our introduction to Silas. We see him on the one hand a man who enjoyed the confidence of the Church at Jerusalem, and on the other hand one who was in sympathy with the progress of the Gentile mission.

As soon as the ambassadors arrived in Antioch the letter which confirmed their freedom from the Mosaic ceremonial Law was read aloud and the result was great joy. It was a new day for Christianity. The shadow of Pharisaism that had gathered over the Gentile churches was now removed. Silas evidently spoke with the prophetic spirit and encouraged and strengthened the spirits of the brethren. It was a crisis that called for courage and wisdom. Silas and Judas remained long enough for them to know that the triumph was secure. Then Judas took the formal report to the Jerusalem Church, and Silas probably remained at Antioch, or if not, he returned immediately.

Silas was 'a chief man among the brethren' at Jerusalem, so that behind this event there must have been some years of devoted Christian life and service, for it was his spiritual gift that made Silas a 'chief man among the brethren.' It was as a prophet that he was outstanding. And 'prophet' in the New Testament means a man to whom God speaks, and through whom God speaks to others. At Antioch Silas exercised his gift of preaching. He 'exhorted,' or as the Revised Version translates it, 'comforted' the brethren, and 'confirmed' them. He 'comforted' them in face of the trials and persecutions and loneliness they had to bear, and perhaps in face of the doubts upon their

[1] F. L. Knowles.

Christian standing, which, in spite of the official decrees, bitter and narrow-minded Jewish believers continued to cast. And he 'confirmed' them—helped them to be brave and staunch in face of all opposition.

Now it was this that led directly to Paul's choice of Silas as his companion for the second missionary journey. Of course Paul had taken it for granted that whenever he started out again Barnabas would still be his companion. But alas! the two friends quarrelled. It was about John Mark. Barnabas was for giving Mark another chance, Paul was not for taking any more risks. From their respective points of view both men were right. However, neither would yield, and the contention grew so sharp that there was nothing for it but to separate. So these life-long friends were parted, and their beautiful partnership in Christian work was broken up.

¶ Richard Baxter remarks: 'Paul and Barnabas are now fully reconciled. As old Grynæus wrote to his friend, "If I see you no more on earth, yet we shall there meet where Luther and Zwinglius are now well agreed."'

Divided while united, each must run
His mighty course not hell should overtake;
And pressing toward the mark must own the ache
Of love, and sigh for heaven not yet begun.
For saints in life-long exile yearn to touch
Warm human hands and commune face to face;
But these we know not ever met again:
Yet once St Paul at distance overmuch
Just sighted Cyprus; and once more in vain
Neared it and passed;—not there his landing-place.[1]

It became a question, then, of finding some one to take Barnabas' place, for Paul needed companionship. Paul was never himself when he was alone, he needed the sympathy of a friend or a group of friends to bring out the best that was in him. And looking round for a new companion his choice fell on Silas, who proved to be a great comrade.

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *St Barnabas*.

¶ In his *Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne* Henry James has the remark that 'every man works better when he has companions.'

Silas possessed many of the traits of the 'son of consolation.' He had influence in the Jerusalem Church, though a Hellenist like Barnabas and a Roman citizen like Paul. He was in thorough sympathy with the onward movement of Christianity among the Gentiles, and his leadership and prophetic gift gave him special adaptation for the missionary enterprise.

So together they set forth, journeying through Syria and Cilicia, and then making their way to the churches in the interior of Asia which Paul and Barnabas had founded on their first missionary journey. Ultimately they came out on the Mediterranean coast of Asia Minor, and while there the vision came to Paul which determined him to carry the gospel into Europe. Together Paul and Silas crossed the Ægean, together they laboured in Philippi, together they shared the Philippian dungeon. From Philippi they passed on to Thessalonica, and then to Berœa. There Silas and Timothy remained while Paul went to Athens, and ultimately they rejoined him during his ministry at Corinth. At Corinth Silas seems to have shared Paul's labours for a considerable time, but after Corinth he just disappears from the pages of the Acts. There is only one later reference to Silas, and that is in the first letter of St Peter. From that letter it is obvious that Silas at the time was a friend and companion of Peter. They were old friends from the Jerusalem days, and after his departure from Paul it seems probable that he joined forces with Peter, and became the link between Peter and Paul. After Peter's momentary betrayal of the Gentile cause at Antioch there may well have arisen some coolness between Paul and him, but it was all forgotten by the time 1 Peter came to be written. That letter is full of traces of Paul's influence. It was very likely written from Rome when Paul was lying there imprisoned. It is good to think that Peter and Paul were together in those dark days, that Paul's closing days were cheered by the friendship and love of the impulsive and warm-hearted Peter, and that Silas was the mutual friend who brought them together.

2. That is absolutely all that we are told of Silas. Can we gather from these brief and scattered notices some idea of the manner of man he was?

(1) He was *a 'prophet.'* This is the finest and best thing that can be said about him. He had the faculty for making God real to people, and that was because God was real to him. People heard God speak through him because he himself was always listening to God. We must know God ourselves before we can reveal Him to others. He must Himself live in us before we can make Him real to others. We must possess God before we can communicate Him. We must be good before we can do good. And that was Silas' crowning glory—he walked with God.

¶ The man who is well, physically, isn't constantly telling you of his good health. It is the poor fellow who is ailing, who is out-of-sorts, who continually proclaims the fact. Drummond would meet men, talk with them, and never say a word, perhaps, about religion; but passing on, he would leave behind him, by the very manliness of his Christianity, an influence for good which would never be dispelled.

Once—and it is a typical incident—he took the trouble to climb three flights of stairs to a student's rooms, chatted with him for a few moments, and then left, saying nothing of personal religion. But so deep was the impression made, that the young fellow subsequently said: 'I don't feel as if I could forget that Drummond sat in my rooms. . . . I say, he's a splendid fellow.' And that young man by-and-by became a Christian, though he had been known in the University as a pronounced and even violent materialist.[1]

(2) He was *a great encourager.* Silas' religion was of the bright and cheerful sort. We see that from what he did when he visited Antioch; he put them all in better heart. Doubt and pessimism and gloom fled in Silas' presence. Barnabas had been a good friend to have when prospects were cheerless and the outlook was threatening. And Silas was a man of much the same spirit. Paul had difficulties and dangers enough, but Silas always strengthened his hands. We have an illustration of the kind of effect Silas had upon him at Corinth when Paul was there alone. Of course the Apostle bore his testimony, he could never be silent about his Lord, but the narrative leaves the impression that he hadn't much pleasure in his work during those solitary days. At length Silas joined him, and then what a change there was! Paul was 'constrained by the word.' He was borne along by it, like a ship in full sail. Preaching became easy work now that Silas was by his side.

And we see that Silas was a cheerful soul from that sentence in the story of the Philippian imprisonment in which it says that Paul and Silas at midnight were praying and singing hymns unto God. We don't read of Paul's ever singing when he was by himself, but he couldn't help singing when Silas was near. Silas sang in the prison at midnight, and Paul couldn't help joining in.

Silas was a happy, singing Christian, and that is what every one of us ought to be. Christianity is the religion of song because it is absolutely sure of the love of God in Christ. The world is burdened with problems, and harassed by great difficulties, and haunted by fears. Men wonder what is going to happen, whether civilization is going to be saved or going to founder. It is ours to encourage the fainting hearts of men. For we know God.

¶ One of the rules for the officers of the British navy reads, 'No officer shall speak discouragingly to his mate, either on the watch or at mess, concerning the business on which he is or may be engaged.'

Blest is the man who with the sound of song
  Can charm away the heartache, and forget
The frost of Penury, and the stings of Wrong,
  And drown the fatal whisper of Regret!
    Darker are the abodes
      Of Kings, tho' his be poor,
    While Fancies, like the Gods,
      Pass thro' his door.

Singing thou scalest Heaven upon thy wings,
  Thou liftest a glad heart into the skies;
He maketh his own sunrise, while he sings,
  And turns the dusty Earth to Paradise;
    I see thee sail along
      Far up the sunny streams,
    Unseen, I hear his song,
      I see his dreams.[1]

(3) He was *a peacemaker.* He removed the coolness between Peter and Paul, bringing these

[1] J. Flew, *Saints of Yesterday*, 19.

[1] Frederick Tennyson.

two great men together, and Paul's end was all the happier and the more serene because he and Peter had clasped hands again.

There is crying need for the peacemaker in our day, for everywhere there are breaches to be healed, and strifes to be assuaged, and differences to be composed. That was a beautiful verdict pronounced upon a clergyman who was being laid in his grave. 'He wasn't much of a preacher,' said an old farmer, 'but he was a great man at making peace among the neighbours.' There are chasms of suspicion and hate dividing class from class and nation from nation, and it is there our peacemaking work is wanted. We must refuse assent to any system which pits capital and labour against each other in a permanent antagonism. We must refrain from hasty and ungenerous speech that would accentuate bitterness. We must bring the Christian temper to bear, and insist upon the reality of brotherhood. It is only on the lines of Jesus that our strife can be composed, and happy friendship established, and by seeking to think and speak and act in the Spirit of Jesus we shall serve our land and earn the blessing of God.

Timothy, the Faithful Friend

Acts xvi. 1, 2.—'And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there named Timothy. . . . The same was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium' (R.V.).

Timothy was certainly Paul's dearest friend. He was his son in the faith, perhaps actually adopted as his heir, and Paul appears to have performed a father's part at his admission into the Jewish Church. But more than all, he was Paul's other self in the ministry of Christ; the Apostle seems to have dreamed of reproducing in this receptive young soul the fruits which Christ had wrought in his own spiritual life.

This was to be the climax of the Apostle's work; and the anxious talking in his two final letters to the young Galatian is chiefly due to his eagerness to witness the success of this experiment in spiritual selection. His whole care seems there centred upon the value of those heirlooms of the faith which Timothy will 'inherit in trust' when Paul's voice is stilled. To borrow a figure which has become current lately, Timothy was Paul's *understudy*, chosen and trained to fill a part when his principal was for any reason unable to undertake it; and when we once catch this idea we get a clue to the reason of Paul's frequent employment of Timothy in tasks which looked at times, beyond his powers.

1. Timothy came into Paul's life during the first Galatian mission about A.D. 46, when he visited the little colony called Lystra, which lay in the seclusion of a glen about eight miles from the main road. There an earnest lad of about fifteen listened to the message of Paul and Barnabas, which fitted in so marvellously with the scriptural lessons of his mother. It was to his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, that Timothy owed the moulding of his character. There was never a time in his whole experience when the majestic words of psalmist and of prophet were unfamiliar to the ear. The Book was no less a part of the growing lad's daily life than the sky above him and the earth beneath his feet.

> Happy he
> With such a mother! faith in womankind
> Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high
> Comes easy to him; and tho' he trip and fall,
> He shall not blind his soul with clay.

It was so with Timothy. He had inherited the religious instinct from Eunice, and through her influence he remained true to it.

¶ That is an exquisitely beautiful passage in which Paul likens Faith to a pilgrim passing on her journey down the ages. She took up her abode, he writes to Timothy, 'Faith took up her abode in the heart of thy grandmother, Lois; and then she dwelt in the heart of thy mother, Eunice; and now I am persuaded that she has made her home in thine heart also.' There is a certain domestic fidelity about the pilgrim Faith.[1]

¶ George Meredith says very nobly, 'My boy, if he fall, will fall from an actual region of purity. He dare not be a sceptic as to that. Whatever his darkness, he will have the guiding light of a memory behind him; so much is secure.'[2]

Timothy looked for a Messiah; now he heard of Jesus as the Christ. He saw the lame man

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Nest of Spears*, 224.
[2] W. M. Macgregor, *Some of God's Ministries*, 46.

healed, and the excited heathen priests preparing Divine honours for the two visitors. He heard the eager remonstrances; and caught the sullen mutterings of the disillusioned mob, which culminated in attempted murder. Paul, the chief speaker, was left for dead, and thrown outside the gates. But he recovered consciousness, and it is probable that the injured missionary was carried to the house of Eunice and her mother Lois, and tenderly nursed. Thus it seems to have come about that the son of the house, who all his life showed signs of missing a father's care, expanded into filial love for Paul, and reverence for Paul's Master. A few weeks later the Apostles revisited the little country town to strengthen their followers. And henceforward Timothy was a Christian. Paul's heart, still sore for Mark, yearned for youthful companionship, and was drawn out to his recent convert. He carried the memory of the lad with him in his absence, and recalled to him long years after how the day of his serious injuries was the time when their path first interlaced.

2. Five years passed, and again the Apostle entered Lystra with sad thoughts; this time Barnabas as well as Mark was an absentee. These changes of personnel made Paul realize his need of an understudy who should not drop off at a critical moment. Luke marks the following events as providential by a special device of his style. '*And behold*,' says Luke, 'a certain disciple named Timotheus.' God's hand was in it.

'Timothy' says Ramsay, 'was in all probability neither very highly educated nor very smart as a speaker.' He had a simple rusticity, which made him shrink from the polished assurance of the men of the world in Corinth and Ephesus. So remote a colony as Lystra must have had educational disadvantages. But the powers of Carlyle and Ruskin have shown us that, apart from spirituality, there is an enormous educational force in the Bible. Eunice's careful training and Lois's shrewd comments gave Timothy a foundation which made him thoroughly equipped for his good work. There were, however, certain handicaps. His father had no objection to his learning the old Hebrew scriptures, but he had drawn the line at circumcision. The Apostle felt, however, that this was an unsatisfactory position for the mission field and Timothy was circumcised. The young man of twenty made a noble profession of faith before many witnesses and in a solemn service of prayer and dedication was set apart for his work.

Timothy was now fairly started on his new calling—the quiet of the glen being exchanged for the bustle of the road. He held a subordinate place in the little company of four—Paul, Silas, Luke, Timothy—and perhaps the finest element in his training was contact with men greater than himself. After Paul and Silas were released from prison in Philippi, Timothy remained with Luke. Soon after he rejoined Paul in Thessalonica as the bearer of gifts from Philippi, the first help of the kind that came to the Apostle in his great enterprise. Timothy and Silas remained in Berœa when Paul fled to Athens, but Paul sent word for them to follow him. Timothy apparently went to Athens, but was sent back to Thessalonica because of disturbances there. Timothy and Silas later went to Corinth with more gifts from Philippi and also from Thessalonica and Berœa. The gifts were gracious, and Paul was comforted by the glad tidings from Thessalonica and 'devoted himself to the word' with great power. Thus it will be seen that Timothy was useful to Paul during the great days in Macedonia and Achaia.

3. His life after this is full, but difficult to trace for a little time. By inference we gather hints of a troubled visit to his old home, and a report to Paul at Syrian Antioch which led to the vigorous Galatian Epistle, and a completely victorious visit afterwards. We hear of work in Ephesus and its neighbourhood, which probably included a share in the early gospel services taken by Epaphras at Colossæ. There is evidence of at least one visit to the storm-centre at Corinth, a certain cause of dread, for the young evangelist was timid of their mental agility and pugnacity. Then comes a deputation with Erastus to Philippi, and the other Macedonian stations, in connection with Paul's great Finance Fund for poor Jews. Timothy was made representative of his own city in presenting this at Jerusalem.

Paul's sudden arrest blurs our knowledge of Timothy's doings at this point. The next clear view we get of him is in Rome, where after several years he is seen alleviating Paul's

captivity by his thoughtful attentions. He was faithful when others flickered. Timothy probably lacked genius, but he had goodness. He was 'a good minister of Jesus Christ.' He could be counted on to the limit. That is loyalty, and loyalty is probably the fundamental trait in character.

Name not as friends the men who by you stand
In pleasant times, when peace and welfare please you;
But him indeed call friend who grasps your hand
In that dark day when want and danger seize you.

After Paul's release from the first Roman imprisonment, he left Timothy in charge at Ephesus. It was a heavy responsibility to have charge of the great church there. But he no doubt measured up to it. The churches of Ephesus were in part composed of men of ripe spiritual experience and great activity. They had also some subtle thinkers who were not always conscious of the dangers of their own tendencies. Timothy had to direct men like these, to judge their differences, choose or confirm the selection of church officers of all ranks, arrange their salaries, manage the leading women, and preach and teach and study besides. Small wonder that he was out of health and out of spirits at times.

Paul is again imprisoned and he knows what the outcome will be. He is no longer in his own hired house, but in the Mamertine Prison. Friends no longer come to see him, for it is now not safe to do so. Timothy is still in Ephesus, but Paul longs for him to come to him before winter. But even while Paul's heart aches for the presence and sympathy of Timothy, he is not unmindful of Timothy's own needs in Ephesus. His last message is full of courage: 'For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness (cowardice), but of power and love and discipline.' It is probable that Timothy went quickly to Paul and paid the penalty for his courage by being thrown into prison himself. At any rate the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says: 'Know ye that our brother Timothy hath been set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.' We may suppose therefore that Paul had the comfort of Timothy's presence with him when the end came. The friendship between these two men, so unequal in years and so different in powers, is one of the most suggestive episodes in the early history of the gospel. It was apparently the one tie that bound Paul tenderly to life, and that mingled a constant human image with his prayers.

Oh, ray of light, my friend!
When sorrow's gloom made life so drear,
Then comfort sweet thy words did lend,
As if Christ spake, 'Be of good cheer!'

Oh, rock of strength, my friend!
When shifting sands beneath my feet,
And changing scenes my steps attend,
Thy truth and constancy are sweet.

I clasp thy hand, my friend!
Thank God that thou art here;
I am not worthy He should send
To me a gift so dear.[1]

The Withholdings of Life

Acts xvi. 7.—'They assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.'

Life is full of efforts and failures. We start out for some desired goal, and things seem to be going well with us and our efforts, but one day we come to a point beyond which we cannot pass. We stand still and look at a success which we cannot attain. We feel more and more, as our ideas and ideals enlarge, our own limitations. We often feel, beating beneath the thing that we are, the thing we would be. As Barrie says, 'The life of every man is a diary in which he means to write one story, and writes another, and his humblest hour is when he compares the volume as it is with what he vowed to make it.' The complete, the further thing always calls us. Life is full of withholdings.

Are we wrong in seeking for the completions of our dreams and visions and ideas? We are wrong to worry over them, but not wrong in seeking to reach them. There are few things sadder on this earth than what we call a disappointed man. He is so cheerless, and apt to be so bitter; there is such lack of lustre in his life. And the pity is, it is not his dis-

[1] Una, *In Life's Garden*, 12.

appointments that have made him a disappointed man; it is the way in which he has brooded on them, and let them sink into his heart and soul. After all, God has inspired the vision, and if afterward He brings us face to face with a high, unscalable blank wall, that is God's doing. The one thing God requires is that we cultivate the Divine life, that we become pure and spotless in character. There is time enough in an eternal life for all completions of mere things; what we must do is to create an eternal life. That is the great answer to all the bafflings in our lives. Things are unimportant except for educational purposes; character is the main thing.

1. We often have to say what the men of old time had to say; 'They assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.' Many a man who is striving to live the Christian life has apparent opportunities to go to Bithynia, to achieve a questionable success, but the way after all closes, or he closes the way. Or there come times when a thing is quite legitimate and right to all intents and purposes, and we say, 'Arise, and let us go hence,' but the very road seems to rise up as a wall to bar our way, and we strive and strain at the barricading circumstances all in vain. Do what we will nothing we can do or say proves to be the open sesame leading to our Bithynia. The very sun of our life seems to be setting when we have to give up that quest; and we thought we were so near to it.

As the result of the withholding we have our eyes upon the real goal—character. We have come to see that, after all, a goal more or less here cannot really matter, but that to lose character would matter for ever. We are better for having the vision and the disappointment, and for living to see how it would have worked out if we had had our own way.

High o'er my head a flower waved
A year ago.
I reached to grasp it with an eager hand—
God did not will it so.
I thought that flower the rose of life
A year ago!
Now, on my bended knees, my God I thank
He did not will it so.

2. That a blessing is withheld is no sign that our longing is wrong or not conformable to the will of God. Often what it is wrong to give to-day it will be right to give to-morrow. The very longing in the heart is a preparation. There must be a ripeness of character and life before some blessings can be really enjoyed or properly used. The thought in the heart, the longing, is a seed which will ripen and develop in God's good time. We are not ready for many legitimate things for which we long. It is of little use to ask for fruit in April that will be ready only in August. Paul, immediately he was converted, said: 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' The answer was, Go into the solitudes of Arabia. I must first get you ready to do. It was only a postponement. He had to wait for his August, his acceptable time. The captain never sends a boy to furl the sails in a storm on the boy's first day at sea; and when the Captain of our salvation wants work done He prepares us for it, so that what before would have found us altogether unfitted for the task we now can revel in and do with the feeling of a conqueror. Many a time, what we call failure is only God's angel stripping us of hindrances, and setting us free from lower entanglements, so that the higher in us may have free use of all its powers. But let us make sure that our purposes are God's purposes, and that, if we are not allowed to see them completed by our own efforts, we are part of God's plan, we are filling in some detail of God's scheme; and when the whole picture is finished we shall see our bit was the one thing without which God's plan could not have been complete. We are here, perhaps, simply to erect a pillar, or to carve a flower, or to write one page in the whole plan of God, and if we write what we have to write or do what we have to do well, the chapter of God will not be marred in our hands.

3. Some people are very anxious as to whether it is possible for them to know God's will for their own lives. They need not be anxious. Let us do good where we are; be good where we are. That is what God is aiming at—to make us good. And if there is anything else God specially wants us to do, He will put it in our way. The world does not exist to give us a chance of doing something great, but to give us a chance of being something good. Things will be left behind one day; what our use of the things has given us will rise with us.

¶ As I was dressing on the morning of Monday, the 17th of September, Nicolson came into my room, and told me that his master had awoke in a state of composure and consciousness, and wished to see me immediately. I found him entirely himself, though in the last extreme of feebleness. His eye was clear and calm—every trace of the wild fire of delirium extinguished. 'Lockhart,' he said, 'I may have but a minute to speak to you. My dear, be a good man—be virtuous—be religious—be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here.' [1]

Just to be good,
This is enough—enough!
Oh, we who find sin's billows wild and rough,
Do we not feel how more than any gold
Would be the blameless life we led of old?
Ah! though we miss
All else but this,
To be good is enough.

It is enough—
Enough—just to be good!
To lift our hearts where they are understood;
To let the thirst for worldly power and place
Go unappeased; to smile back in God's face
With the glad lips our mother used to kiss.
Ah! though we miss
All else but this,
To be good is enough.

4. Let us take encouragement and cheer from this thought also: full attainment would mean our death. If we had attained our highest we should have to begin to go back. That is the value of great ideals and purposes. That is why we should choose great causes for our efforts, some field where there will always be possibilities of endeavour and achievement, even when we have reached some of the goals on the way to fulfilment. Let us make our ideals, our prophecies, when we are nearest God; let them all be His ideals, then we shall never be dwarfed, but always ascending, growing, developing, achieving. The work we have to do in the world is God's work. Our task is to find out what that work is for us and make it a fact as far as our time and opportunity will allow.

And how great a hope is the future life as pictured in the New Testament to all lives who can see visions and dream dreams of what they would like to be and do. We all need this hope, the greatest as much as the least, for the greatest never realize themselves any more than the least. To say to all men there is a world of fulfilment, that God leaves nothing incomplete, is to put a star in the sky of life that cannot be dimmed. The dream life, the life of vision that is now all beyond us, will then become the real, the commonplace, and that in turn will but make way for greater visions and greater efforts. That will be one of the charms of eternity—not completeness of life, but completeness of effort of life.

[1] J. G. Lockhart, *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, x. 217.

The Call from Macedonia

Acts xvi. 9, 10.—'And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.'

Sir William Ramsay says that these two verses form what is in many respects the most remarkable paragraph in the Acts of the Apostles. In the light of all that has happened since, we can see that this is one of the turning-points in history. Both Western civilization and Christianity spring from this hour. And this world-shaking impulse broke from a human soul in a night-season, and was born of silence and brooding and faith.

It was through Paul that the Eternal Spirit took to do with human nature in these lands west of the Bosporus, with the result that something has been given to us—a certain conception of life, of God, of ourselves, and of what is expected from us. It all began here: and it all began in the soul of one individual man. Every great movement that has blazed a trail for man through the jungle of his life had its birth and flash-point in some individual human soul. Is not the truth that any progress in species throughout the whole range of animate nature—in flower, or grain, or fruit, or living creature, from the lowliest creeping thing to wise and erected man—has been through the emergence from time to time of variations or sports, things of an unusual force, like the appearance of a genius amongst men, and that

those variations or sports have leapt upon their opportunity and established themselves in the system of things?

Nor would the cause of a more socialized order and a more even lot for men suffer from the acceptance of this fact and law of all life—that the waves of progress and of a heightening possibility have their home and starting-place in individual souls. For the dangers, and indeed the horrors, of individualism arise not from the fact—which is God's own ordinance—that all new and advancing things begin not in committees, or in public meetings, or by a general vote, but in flashes and impulses and explosions within solitary natures; the dangers and horrors of individualism arise not from the fact that the great new things thus *come into being*, but from the fact that those fresh, great, advancing things are apt to be exploited by self-seeking men for their own advantage and only remotely for the good of the race. We know what we should think if in our day a man of genius and research were to discover the source of cancer and the cure for it, and a syndicate were to buy up the secret from that man to make a corner of the discovery, dribbling out grains at great cost!

In our day we know more than they did in simpler times as to how a vision comes to a man, even when, as in the case of Paul, the vision is of that clamant and invincible kind which leads to unusual and dangerous action. We know now that what a man perceives with great clearness in some sudden moment always bears a real relation to what in our day is called his subconscious or subliminal life. In short, a thing that occurs to us amazingly and in moments is a thing about which we had been thinking. It may be that we had never thought very long about it. It had occurred to us, and after dallying with it for a moment we had gone on to think of something else. But we now know that when we think about a thing and then cease thinking about it our brain is not really done with the thing. So this vision of the man from Macedonia could come only to a man like Paul who had often dreamed of telling Europe about Jesus Christ.

¶ His pupils saw sometimes a strange sight, their master moved to tears over a geography lesson, as, pointing to continents, islands, and peoples, he would cry, 'And these are pagans, pagans!' Moulton was his Troas, where he ceaselessly heard Macedonia's entreaty. From his cottage windows he looked out into the uttermost parts of the earth. His sister-in-law, Catharine, says that 'more than once she saw him stand motionless for an hour and more in his little garden, absorbed in his tense thoughts and prayers, till his neighbours judged him beside himself.'[1]

And then Paul was always a missionary, even before he became what he so proudly and humbly called himself, 'an ambassador for Christ.' We have our Lord's own word for it that the Pharisees would compass land and sea to make one proselyte, and Paul was a Pharisee of Pharisees. And more, he was an honest man. Christianity never changed his deep understanding of the business of our life—that we are here by our word and deed to advocate something; that every man's life should be a propaganda of what he holds to be truth and the best. So long as Pharisaism was the best Paul knew, he was, as we say, 'all out' for Pharisaism. When the Crucified Christ dethroned Pharisaism, Paul understood clearly that Christ must henceforward be the business of his life.

The story of how, precisely, Paul came to think of entering Europe with the gospel is itself full of guidance for any of us who want to make the best use of our life. There was at the back of everything his upbringing as a seriously religious man, and his religion already a missionary and propagandist thing. Then came his conversion to Christ, which, changing almost everything, had nevertheless not changed that sound conception of life, namely, that we are here, all of us, to commend and advance some total view of life's meaning which we hold as most assuredly blessing life.

He must often have thought of Europe, but we have warrant for supposing that he never worried about it. A good man will do well to believe that if he holds himself ready each day to do what God wants him to do he shall have done before he dies what God intended he should do. But we do read that, just about this time, the voice of God, as Paul would say, began to indicate Europe more precisely. And this happened in his case as it often happens with ourselves, the only difference between him and

[1] S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, 51.

us being that we are apt not to make much of certain things that touch our souls firmly enough, but delicately. And we are too apt to say of some juncture of events which holds us up or embarrasses us that it was only accident, or it was nothing, when Paul would have said, and did say here, 'It is God.' So things began to point in a certain direction. He and his party thought of turning to the one side and going into Asia, and something seemed to hold them up. Then they decided to turn towards the other side, but there also they were forbidden, as if God had met them bodily on the highway and turned them back.

¶ One recalls the gallant army-order of General Foch on the eve of the battle of the Marne. 'My left flank has been turned: my right flank is threatened. I have decided therefore'—ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have said: 'I have decided to retreat that I may save my lines of communication!'—'therefore I have decided,' said Foch, '*to advance with all my forces by the centre!*' [1]

That is what Paul did, and it brought him right up against the sea! Now it is not to be wondered at that, when Paul fell asleep that night to the swish of the sea, the figure of a man from the other side should appear to him, saying in effect, 'It was for my sake and for the sake of the Europe which is my home that your pathway was blocked. God has brought you to the margin of the sea, not here and now to a standstill, but to the edge and moment of a new venture.'

May it not be that, by the very embarrassments of our life, and of our best life in all directions just now in these old countries, we are being directed, and indeed compelled, by God to take our eyes as much as may be away from ourselves, and to take up, as we have never yet taken up, the task of unifying the whole world with the mind of Jesus Christ concerning God and man and duty? We know that, had Paul refused to launch out, there is a fair chance that the Christian movement might have turned back upon itself, and might for ages have been lost in orientalism and futility. We do know that, by setting out, Paul brought the saving salt to Europe; and in saving Europe, saved Christianity, for he liberated its genius.

If we were all of us only quiet enough and believing enough, feeling as we ought to feel how hot and angry and difficult life in its fairer forms is becoming among ourselves; and, on the other hand, if we could see, as we look abroad, the strange silences, the sinister groupings of the nations, the mounting possibilities which, unless God hinder them from maturing, might even now overwhelm the world—if we considered these things soberly and bravely, seeking guidance, we should awake with a new light in our eye, and something fresh in our voice; for something would have come to us which, in its deep and permanent principles, was the very thing which came to Paul at Troas, a voice calling to him from lands beyond the sea.

[1] J. A. Hutton, *The Dark Mile*, 296.

Europe's Debt to St Paul

Acts xvi. 9, 10.—'And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.'

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the influence of St Paul on the development of Christianity. And if we follow the facts of history, we recognize that it was largely through his instrumentality that the main current of Christianity set westward.

1. What was the Providence behind this direction? We see certain natural and human factors.

(1) *Christianity was almost bound to travel westward.*—If we look at the position of Palestine on a large map of the Eastern hemisphere, we cannot help being struck by its central position. If one wanted to choose a spot from which to influence the three great continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, one would inevitably be led to select Palestine, the neck of land which joins them together. In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem is shown an omphalos which is declared to be the centre of the world. This is a curious claim, and is probably a remnant of pagan superstition; but it is also prosaic reality. It *is* geographically the central spot of the world. And yet the possibilities of movement thence in every direction are limited. Palestine lies with its back to the East and its face to the West; for the sea before

it is the really open way. Behind and below lay tracts of desert, across which there were only the narrow and difficult caravan routes. The natural land connections are round the shores of the Mediterranean, which stretch out like two arms from the bosom of the Levantine coast. But the Jews had never used the sea way, for they had been shut out from the maritime plain by their Philistine foes. One needs, however, only to travel a few miles westward of Jerusalem, and the artificial barrier is surmounted, and the sea stretches invitingly beneath.

Although Palestine was the centre of the geographical world, it was anything but the centre of the civilized world. Civilization lay wholly westward. We retain the old saying: All roads lead to Rome; and it was literally true. The great roads which the Romans were such adepts at constructing were all planned to lead by the most direct route straight to Rome. Christianity travelled westward because the roads went that way; and the news of the gospel had reached Rome long before Paul could get there, he arriving at last, after a dreadful sea voyage, only by compulsion and in chains.

(2) *In Paul's personality we can discern Western sympathies.*—Paul boasts that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and of the straitest sect of the Pharisees; and everything we know of him supports this confession. That he had sat at the feet of Gamaliel is amply confirmed by the marks of the Rabbinical training which remain in his sometimes strained exegesis and curious argument. But his Jewish training was not all disadvantage even for preaching to the Western world. He regarded religion as rooted in history, and therefore he retained the sense of God as constantly active in the world. But other influences more manifestly fitted him for his distinctive mission. Although trained at Jerusalem, he was a Jew of the Dispersion, and this made for a wideness which no Palestinian Pharisee could be expected to display. He had been born and brought up in Tarsus under the shadow of a famous Hellenic University, and there is plenty of evidence in his writings that his mind had been touched by Hellenistic thought. His ethical teaching is so like that of the Stoic Epictetus that actual connection has sometimes been suspected. Here was a man who could speak to the Greek world, and also adapt himself to a pagan and philosophic audience. Then there was his Roman citizenship, of which he was almost as proud as he was of his Hebrew blood. It gave him a passport throughout the Empire, and secured him protection at the hands of the local authorities. It instilled into him an obvious Roman patriotism, which inspired him with the idea of a still mightier Empire, in which all nationalities and races should be free and equal, the universal Church of which Christ is sole Head. Here was a man who would have been wasted on the East, but was eminently fitted for the West.

2. Behind the natural features there was a supernatural choice. Granted the material factors, we can discern not only an immanent guidance through them, but at certain points a visible direction by the finger of God. We see the intervention of God, not only on the Damascus road, but many times before Paul is at the task to which he was called.

¶ There is nothing in the New Testament more dramatic than the great missionary's silent journey across Asia. He set his face towards the evangelization of the stately commercial capitals of the Eastern world. But in each place he was 'forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word,' and trudged on in stillness. 'The Spirit suffered him not.' As the Quakers would say, 'there was a stop in his mind against it.'

> I hear a voice you cannot hear,
> Which says I must not stay;
> I see a hand you cannot see,
> Which beckons me away.

And the result of Paul's obedience to that mysterious inward restraint was—Europe! It shifted the balance of power, and altered the face of the world. As Benjamin Kidd has demonstrated, the great Western empires sprang out of that extraordinary silence, that mystical submission. It is ever so. Carey planned to evangelize the South Seas. The inward monitor said *India*! Livingstone selected China. The voice said *Africa*! And who that realizes what Europe has meant to the world, what Carey has meant to India, and what Livingstone has meant to Africa, shall doubt the wisdom of unquestioning compliance with that secret dictate? [1]

[1] F. W. Boreham, *Mountains in the Mist*, 55.

We are bound to rule out any idea that God had any predilection for Europe as compared with Asia or Africa. But there was something in the nature of things which, for the ultimate fulfilment of a world purpose, made it necessary for the Divine strategy to attack Europe first. The gospel was made to flow this way, only so that it could flow the more swiftly and surely to the whole world. With all the religious obtuseness of the Western world, there *was* a certain testimony and service it could give to Christianity. If the West was to become Christian, it would first have to be converted and submit to a certain change of nature. The conquest of the Empire and the conversion of Europe was a necessary testimony to the real power of Christianity to change character and influence life. If it could succeed there, it could succeed anywhere. Christianity had to win its spurs in the West. But the West also gave it something that it needed : a protective sheath both of thought and of government which would make it possible to evangelize the world without losing its identity and its historic basis.

3. How can Europe discharge its debt ?

(1) It is hardly realized that its distinctive civilization is due to Christianity. Its passion for liberty is founded upon the idea that personality is of ultimate and infinite value. Despite the lapses, the inconsistencies, and the attempted tyrannies in European history, liberty is in our blood. And there is little doubt that it is the gospel and the Church which have taught Europe this lesson. For there is no rational basis for democracy anywhere save in the gospel of Christ. And the Church, for all its failure and its denials of its own offspring, has shown the people how to practise democracy and even communism, while others have only been arguing about it. Its highest achievements in art and in music owe their distinctive beauty and joy to the inspiration of Christian worship.

¶ In painting, as we know, some of the greatest men who ever wielded brush and palette spent themselves in the effort to reproduce those precious moments in history when,

> the Word had breath, and wrought
> With human hands the creed of creeds
> In loveliness of perfect deeds,
> More strong than all poetic thought.

As to music, it is a mere statement of fact to say that its development has been a direct product of Christianity. The mere mention of Bach, together with his great predecessor Palestrina and the mighty men who followed, like Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart, and Handel, is enough to bring to our minds alike what music owes to Christianity and what music would have been without that inspiration. It was no prejudiced ecclesiastic, but the great Wagner himself, who said that the only music which now, at least, we can place on the same footing as other arts is an exclusive product of Christianity.[1]

(2) Europe can pay her debts only by handing on her religion. She has really nothing else to hand on. Her colonizing power will not hand on her true life. Her greatest colonies have not only been religious, but were often undertaken in order to get freedom for religion. She will find that although the colour and physique of her children may remain in distant climes, the colonization which loses touch with the home religion will produce a type that in moral feature is utterly alien to European ethics, and approximates to the savage mind it has displaced.

It is not even her system of government that she has to hand on to others. Europeans have taught government to the world, and there is no need to deny that an institution like the British Empire has brought security and peace, health and happiness, to millions, where before there reigned cruelty, anarchy, and tyranny. The British Empire has, under God, been a blessing wherever it has extended, but it must learn to find higher sanctions if it is going to retain the loyalties of the great subject races under its sway. There is more than a danger that the British Empire is becoming commercialized, is becoming ' The British Empire, *Limited*.' There are abroad plans of exploitation and schemes of ruling others, not for their benefit, but for ours, which will involve us in a terrible fall and an inevitable fate.

We must decide whether we can afford to face an irreligious world. Europe irreligious is a prospect that fails to fill some people with fear, for we shall be able to reckon that perhaps for centuries the old ethics and the momentum of the faith will remain when the faith itself

[1] F. T. Woods, *Great Tasks and Great Inspirations*, 137.

has been destroyed. But, when one contemplates an irreligious world, even the stoutest atheist might begin to reconsider his policy. The great eastern faiths are falling before the attack of scepticism and the temptation of materialism. It is unlikely that they will accept our religion so long as it is made to sanction war, and support the present economic system. And with no religion at all, what will their dense and rising hordes become? Our remorseless competitors in commerce, and at last our conquerors in military power. Christianity holds the pass for humanity and the future; let it fall at this hour and the world is lost, betrayed by that great continent which once knew the light, but refused to walk in it.

Lydia

Acts xvi. 13-15, 40.—'And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us. And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.'

These verses contain all we know concerning Lydia. And yet when we look carefully into them they present a wonderfully complete biography.

1. Lydia was a native of Thyatira and probably spent most of her life there. This town, situated in the north-west part of the district of Lydia, in Asia Minor, was a centre of industry. It was famed for its trade-guilds. Each trade had its guild, and specially prominent was the Guild of Dyers. Purple was a favourite colour with the ancients, and this woman, who was 'a seller of purple,' may have been disposing of the dye, or the cloth which had passed through the colouring process. Commerce is a great leveller as well as an educator, and one is not surprised to find that women had greater social freedom and a larger measure of independence in Thyatira than in many other parts of the empire. Lydia is proof of this.

We may reasonably take for granted that Lydia had been married, and that she and her husband had carried on business as dyers in Thyatira. They had not been without tokens of success, and it looked as if the flowing tide of prosperity was coming their way when death put an arrestment on their schemes, and Lydia was left a widow. Further changes followed and we find Lydia established in Philippi—a Roman colony in the northern part of Macedonia. It was a place of considerable importance both from a military and from a commercial point of view. It was the meeting-place of the stream of traffic between East and West, between Europe and Asia. That which drew Lydia to this city in the interests of trade drew Paul in the interests of the gospel; it possessed strategic value both for the trader and for the missionary.

Lydia was a Jewish proselyte, and as such she had given thought to the highest things. Equally devout by nature and habit, she was walking with God up to the full measure of her knowledge and doing her best to serve Him. She had adopted the Hebrew faith, she worshipped one God; but she was not satisfied. Like the Ethiopian eunuch, she cherished longings that could scarcely be expressed in words—a hunger of love created by the very pureness of the law which she had accepted as her rule of life.

> Longing is God's fresh heavenward will
> With our poor earthward striving;
> We quench it that we may be still
> Content with merely living;
> But, would we learn that heart's full scope
> Which we are hourly wronging,
> Our lives must climb from hope to hope
> And realize our longing.[1]

2. We notice two things in connection with Lydia's readiness to receive the truth.

(1) *She kept the Sabbath day holy.*—In this heathen town of Philippi, and all over the world, the Sabbath day was unknown, except among the Jews. We find Lydia here, then, engaged in business; and in a line which was pursued, most probably, by many others in the city of Philippi. When the Sabbath day dawns will she keep her shop open, in order to maintain competition with other dealers, who know nothing of the Sabbath? Many a man who professes to be a Christian, in our cities and all over the land, labours through the Lord's Day

[1] Lowell.

like any other day, claiming that he is compelled to do it in self-defence. Lydia was not a woman of an elastic conscience. When the Sabbath day came her house of business was closed; it remained closed all day long. Neither she nor the women whom she employed could be found there. They had left home, and gone outside the city to spend the Sabbath.

¶ A well-known London Methodist, the superintendent of an influential Sunday School, tells this story. He was on his way to Church one day and discovered that a newly-established fruiterer's shop was open on Sunday. 'What do you think of that?' he enquired of the stalwart son at his side. 'Rotten, dad,' was the instant answer. 'Let us tell them so,' said the father. 'Yes; do,' said his son. So they went into the shop. 'You have a fine shop here,' said the father to the man in charge. 'Yes, sir,' said the shopman, obviously gratified. 'Is this your own shop?' queried the superintendent. 'No,' said the man; 'I wish it was.' 'Will you give the proprietor a message from me?' said the City man. 'Certainly, sir,' said the assistant politely. 'I want you to tell him from me—here is my card, and I have lived round here for forty years—that it is a big mistake for him to open his shop on Sundays. It is bad from a business point-of-view. I shall never come into the shop; the people who go to that Church won't come, and lots of others who think as we do won't come. Then it is bad from a moral point-of-view. I am the superintendent of that Sunday School, and I object strongly on moral grounds to this shop being open on Sundays. Will you tell him that?' 'Yes, sir,' said the man. 'Good-morning,' said the superintendent. 'Good-morning,' said the assistant. The shop was closed the very next Sunday,[1]

¶ 'No one who knows England,' wrote Lecky, 'will doubt that the existence of an enforced holiday primarily devoted to religious worship has contributed enormously to strengthen the moral fibre of the nation, to give depth, seriousness, and sobriety to the national character, and to save it from being wholly sunk in selfish pursuits and material aims.'

(2) *She was at the place of prayer.*—The picture is exquisitely drawn, of the little band of patriotic Hebrews and proselytes, too few or too poor to build a commodious synagogue, fixing on a convenient spot outside the city, beside running water. It was probably enclosed as a sacred place, but not roofed; and there 'prayer was wont to be made.' Lydia was away from her native place, but she was worshipping. The faith that had come to her at Thyatira was not left behind with that city. She was in a city without churches and ministers but she was worshipping. In material matters she had learned to look after herself, and the spirit of self-help, so strong there, she applied to the needs of her soul.

I know a spot where budless twigs
  Are bare above the snow,
And where sweet winter-loving birds
  Flit softly to and fro;
There with the sun for altar-fire,
  The earth for kneeling-place,
The gentle air for chorister,
  Will I adore Thy face.[1]

3. Lydia had a nature highly sensitive to religious influences; and appeals made to her spiritual faculties met a quick response. She had a clear perception that this life is not all, and that loyalty to one's own soul means loyalty to things invisible and immortal. 'The Lord opened her heart.' For such as Lydia it is not His way to use violent means, forcing the locks of the heart. He may deal so with a rebellious spirit like that of Saul of Tarsus—the preacher by the river-side. But for his hearer no such violence was necessary: she went forth to meet God, tremblingly; her heart was opened by consent and preparation of her will. Immediately on hearing the truth from the lips of the Apostle, Lydia applied it to herself. She gave 'heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul.' She called her own will into action, and by deliberate choice set herself on the side of Him who came to announce a Divine love for all and to be a universal Redeemer.

Two facts prove the sincerity of Lydia's confession of Christ.

(1) *She received baptism.*—Not necessarily in an ostentatious manner, but in a way to make the fact known to all who had a right to know. She did not ask whether it would be likely to increase or decrease her popularity. She ac-

[1] *Methodist Recorder*, Jan. 6, 1927.

[1] Alice Brown.

cepted Christ; and she wanted to be baptized into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Considering all the circumstances, this was a remarkable exhibition of devotion and courage.

With her were also baptized her household—either her children, or the workers in her business, and perhaps her domestic servants. It was understood that the proselyte to Judaism took over his household with him, and the same was sometimes done in the case of the earlier converts to Christianity. But may we not see more in the baptism of Lydia's household than 'the feeling of solidarity in an ancient family'? May her character not have recommended her faith, and her piety been persuasive?

(2) *She exercised Christian hospitality.*—'She besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord.' There is an indefinable grace in the very expression of Lydia's desire to be of service. She considered opportunities of kindness to be God's *rewards*, not His burdens. When shall duty be so transfigured to all disciples of Christ? When shall men learn to ask reverently, 'Have I been faithful enough to be allowed to show this kindness? Have I dealt so loyally with the truth that truth's messenger may cross my threshold?' Such questions reveal not a mere mood, but a way of thought; they are the flowering of a gentle life, lived loftily.

When the quiet riverside scene and service came to be followed by violent persecutions, we lose sight of Lydia. But we may take it that her faithfulness was not shaken; for when Paul and Silas came out of prison, they 'entered into the house of Lydia.' We cannot be far wrong in judging that during those stormy hours she betook herself with her household to prayer and intercession. She would continue worthy of her guests, whether God would vouchsafe to let them return to her or not. Had she proved unfaithful, they would not have re-entered her house; had her love chilled, there would have been no open door for them. In sunshine and wild storm she had earned the right to repeat, 'If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there.'

Her spirit of love touched that Philippian Church. As we find the Apostle writing later, 'Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.' May we not fairly infer that this mother in Israel, first-named convert on European soil, had affected the whole of the little Church that gathered round her, and that, as it continued to grow, her influence still remained strong? For we must remember that in the house of Lydia was cradled the Philippian Church—that Church which Paul afterwards described as his 'joy and crown.'

Songs in the Prison

Acts xvi. 25.—'But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them' (R.V.).

1. Paul and Silas had been stripped and scourged, beaten heavily with rods, and in great pain and suffering they had been thrust into the inner prison and their feet made fast in the stocks. Yet in such a place and under such conditions they sang. A strange place in which to sing! They prayed also. We are not so much surprised at that. It would have been surprising if they had not prayed. But to sing and to sing hymns, to be joyous and exultant—that is the remarkable thing.

It is one of the most triumphant moments of New Testament Christianity. And that is what faith ought to do for us; it ought to give us the power to sing in all sorts of devastating and difficult circumstances. It is easy enough to be happy in pleasant circumstances, when life is sunny and bright and everything is going well. The man who cannot rejoice in the beauty of the world around him and the glad and gracious gift of life, when the sun is shining and he has home and work and friendships, is a churlish creature—or there is something far wrong with his health. But to sing in a dungeon, and at midnight, when happiness is a victory and cheerfulness a miracle, that is the special gift and grace of Christianity.

¶ At a time when the Methodists were greatly persecuted, John Nelson, the Yorkshire stonemason, the friend of Wesley, was flung into a filthy dungeon in Bradford. 'When I came to the dungeon,' he says, 'it stunk worse than a hogsty by reason of the blood and filth which sink into it from the slaughter-house above it:

yet my soul was so filled with the love of God that it was a Paradise to me. I cried out, "Oh, the glorious liberty of the sons of God!" And I fell down on my knees and gave God thanks.'

This kind of spirit is a characteristic product of the Christian faith. Here were two men who had given up everything because Christ had filled them with a passionate longing to preach the gospel to all sorts of people they had never seen; these people took them and flung them into a prison, and their faith so kindled in that prison that they burst into singing and were indeed joyfully triumphant. Faith in Jesus Christ is able to make a man independent of circumstances and superior to his surroundings. He escapes not *from* the prison in the first place, but *in* the prison.

¶ It was from her prison in Vincennes that Madame Guyon, that beautiful mystic soul, sent forth her sweetest songs in the night. 'It sometimes seemed to me,' she wrote, 'as if I were a little bird whom the Lord had placed in a cage, and that I had nothing now to do but sing.' And this is what she sang:

A little bird am I,
Shut in from fields of air,
And in my cage I sit and sing
To Him who placed me there;
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my Lord, it pleaseth Thee.

Thou hast an ear to hear,
A heart to love and bless,
And though my notes were ne'er so rude,
Thou wouldst not hear the less;
Because Thou knowest as they fall
That love to Thee inspires them all.

My cage confines me round,
Abroad I cannot fly;
But though my wings are tightly bound,
My heart's at liberty.
My prison walls cannot control
The flight, the freedom, of my soul.

2. 'And the prisoners were listening to them.' They had an unseen audience. They did not know the prisoners were listening. They were not thinking of the prisoners at all. They were thinking of God and His goodness and His unconquerable and all-providing love. But all the time the prisoners were listening to them.

Our unseen audience is one of life's most familiar facts. When a great politician addresses a meeting, be it large or small, he knows that his biggest audience is beyond him, among people he has never seen, who are waiting none the less for his message. It is with this responsibility in his mind that he speaks, or ought to speak. But this is true of every one of us. We have all our unseen audience. There are people taking their cue for life from us. There are some whose attitude to the highest things is partly being decided by us. There are people who are taking their view of Jesus Christ from what they see in us, not consciously perhaps, but by the secret process which goes on all the time.

Furthermore, what gave this unseen audience the hearing ear and made them listen so keenly was the fact that they were fellow-prisoners. They were suffering the same fate; they were chafing under the same bonds. That suffering gave them a quickened interest. They were keen to know if Paul and Silas had any light on the situation. They were eager to learn what it was that made them so cheerful in the prison—what the secret of that strange victorious thrill in their singing. It was more than curiosity that made them listen; it was need and sympathy. It matters not what be our lot of hardship or trouble, we are never alone. There are always our fellow-prisoners, and their fellow-feeling keys up their interest till the slightest suggestion that touches their trouble will set their heart-strings throbbing.

¶ In one of Mark Rutherford's letters he tells how after writing his autobiography—a book which relates a sad and depressing story of tragic experiences—there came thousands of letters from people who told him he had described just their case. He had his audience, unseen, of fellow-prisoners, and that fact made them listen to him.

What a chance this reveals to us of helping others! What a bracing challenge it throws to us in our suffering! Whatever hardship life gives us to bear there are others round us whose ears are tense with interest and whose hearts are sensitive with pain. They are looking to us to catch the inspiration of our spirit.

¶ Some years ago, when journeying in Southern Europe, the exigencies of travel necessitated landing at a port in Sicily on a

Sabbath afternoon. I was alone and lonely, and, being unable to speak the language of the country, felt myself cut off indeed from my fellows. Home was far distant, and its insistent memories served but to intensify the feeling of isolation as I wandered along the sea-front in those unfamiliar surroundings. Presently I heard the strains of what sounded like an English hymn, and quickening my footsteps I found myself outside a Sailors' Bethel, where was being sung, 'What a Friend we have in Jesus.' Never did that dear old song sound so sweet to me, and never did I quite realize until then what it means to hear 'the Lord's song in a strange land.' I understood then how full of encouragement and helpfulness we who are ourselves in any furnace of affliction may be to our fellow-believers who, all unconsciously to us, are passing through the same 'strange land.'[1]

3. Now this is surely an argument for a cheerful spirit. If Paul and Silas had done nothing by their singing but to put heart into these men they would have done good service. None of us probably realize how much we can do for the world about us just by sunny gladness and a cheerful spirit. 'The day was dark and gloomy,' some one once wrote in the *Boston Herald*, 'but Phillips Brooks came down Newspaper Row and all was bright.' There are people whose very presence can chase the clouds away and scatter gloom. They go about 'lighting fires in cold rooms.' Stevenson was sunk all his life in one of life's darkest dungeons —the dungeon of ill-health—and he took it as his mission in life to turn his dungeon into a lighthouse. He made a task of happiness. 'This is our post,' he said of the place of trouble, 'and our business is to make happiness for others.' Would it not change the face of life for many people if we learned to say of our dark or difficult situation, 'This is my post; I am on duty here, on duty by the appointment of God, and my business is to make happiness for others'?

But this was not merely a song of courage; it was a song of faith. That was why it had such a thrilling effect on the prisoners. It is a good thing to preach courage to men who are facing the storm, the simple duty of setting their teeth and going through with it. But there is no gospel in that, and it may sometimes be taken for an impertinence. The gospel comes in when you tell them of the presence with them in the storm of the Lord God. That is the secret of the difference between the Stoic and the Christian. In *The Cloister and the Hearth*—one of our greatest novels—the hero, sore downcast, is going through a perilous forest and is cheered every now and then by his stout-hearted comrade with this word, 'Courage, comrade, the devil is dead!' The phrase served its purpose. It is as good as anything else to express the heart that is not afraid of shadows. But true courage has its source in faith, and the secret of faith is not pretence that the devil is dead, but confidence in a living and victorious God. The word that sets our pulses leaping is not the word that tells us to shut our eyes to difficulties. It is the word that tells us how difficulties can be overcome, and hardships vanquished, and sorrow transfigured, and all things made to work together for good.

4. How is the world going to become convinced of God? That is the great problem. How are men going to be brought to see Jesus? Life does its part, by taking people sooner or later and bringing them into some kind of prison-house. For a time comes when life takes the man who shuts out God and walls him up in his own godless world with his own unillumined soul. Life plays its part; that is the one side. But when people are brought into the prison-house? That is where our task comes in. 'Ye are my witnesses,' said Jesus. A witness is one who reflects something he has seen; and a Christian man, according to Christ, is one who gives his life to seeing something in Christ which he reflects to the world in a life which is victorious with cheerfulness in the most depressing circumstances and with love to the most discouraging people.

That is how the world is going to be redeemed. Men are not going to be argued into goodness; they are going to be won into it. They are not going to be lectured into the Kingdom; they are going to be 'called' into it, called irresistibly by the worth of lives which are the product of faith in Christ. Perhaps our prison is deep and dark, our case is bitter, and our life is lonely. How can we reach this faith which sings in a dungeon? 'How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' The great secret is a new

[1] J. S. Holden, *Redeeming Vision*, 106.

look at that love of God in Jesus which is ours in Him, a love which is victorious over everything, a love which appoints our every situation and gives us grace to find in it some redeeming task or some deepening experience and some new discovery of His truth and love. And the deeper the darkness, the sterner the circumstances, the more opportunity there is for the triumph of faith, and the more perfectly will we be able to help others whom suffering has swept within the orbit of our influence.

Belief as the Condition of Salvation

Acts xvi. 30, 31.—'And said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.'

Dr Bosanquet, the distinguished philosopher, has said of this old question, 'What must I do to be saved?' that it has 'sounded since the coming of Christ the S.O.S. call of humanity.' The eternal gospel claims to give to all men at all times the fullest and truest answer: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

This great declaration was made by Paul over nineteen hundred years ago, but it is the declaration with which the Christian Church still confronts and challenges the world. Things have vastly changed in the course of the centuries, but in two things there has been no change. There has been no change in the ultimate *need* of the human soul. The changes are generally on the surface. When we come to the deep things, we remain the same. In the last resort the soul knows it wants saving. And there has been no change in the method with which the Christian Church seeks to meet that need. The Bible view is that the human race is in the grip of that terrible thing that we call *sin*. In this respect there is no distinction and there is no exception. 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.'

There are two main aspects of sin. We may think of it as an *act* bringing in its consequences a certain peril. Or we may think of it as a *power*, exercising a sort of tyranny over men and binding them in a terrible and almost hopeless bondage. Now salvation, if it is to be adequate and complete, must be salvation from sin in both of those aspects. It must be a salvation from sin's guilt and doom, and it must also be a salvation from sin's power. And the condition of realizing salvation in both these aspects is by 'believing' in the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Salvation must include *salvation from the guilt and penalty and pain of sin*. The representation of the Bible is that sin entails penalty and punishment. And that again is a truth which human experience amply confirms. Science emphasizes with almost cruel insistence that connection between sin and punishment. There is no possibility of sinning, says Science, without paying the penalty. But the penalty of which Science mainly speaks is the penalty of the wrong which a man reaps in his own proper person. If a man sows to the flesh, well then, of the flesh he reaps corruption. Of course there is a grim truth in that, but as it is generally stated in these days it suffers from two ends; it suffers both by way of excess and defect. This doctrine of the inevitable punishment of sin suffers by way of excess. For it simply is not true that every act of sin is followed by its fitting measure of penalty. There are all sorts of ways of avoiding the physical penalties of wrong. Here is a man, for instance, who reaps in disease and an early death the bitter fruit of profligate living. But here is another who has lived equally as wicked a life, who because he happens to be rich has been able to command all that medical science can do for him, and who accordingly evades the penalties of his sin and lives on into a hale old age. But the most serious criticism of the prevailing conception of the relation between sin and punishment is that it suffers by way of defect. Those who treat this relationship as if it were a sort of natural law, a self-acting sort of law, leave God out of account. They think of sin as something done primarily, if not solely, against themselves. And sin is that. But the really terrible and awful thing about sin is that it is done, not simply against ourselves, but against God. Sin against our fellows is a crime, but it is sin only when we think of it as against God.

¶ All the great dramas of literature which have analysed conscience have brought men face to face with God. In *Macbeth* we are left in the silence, alone with God and the trembling soul of a man to whom sin had come home. The name of God slips into the record and all the perfumes of Arabia are not sufficient to

sweeten life again. In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* the offender is led at last to confession, for the call of conscience 'bayed like blood-hounds in his blood,' until he came before the great white throne of God, and there his sin was yielded up 'not with reluctance, but with a joy unutterable.' In Dostoieffsky's *Crime and Punishment*, perhaps the greatest of all analytical studies of the problem of evil, in almost every chapter the criminal is brought face to face with God, and at last, in surrender to God, he found relief in penitence.[1]

A man may have paid the physical penalty for his sin, but he knows he is wrong with God. And there can be no ultimate peace for any one of us until the torment has been taken out of the memory, and we are rid of all haunting fears. How is such a deliverance to be secured? How can the remembrance of our past, stained and blotted by sin as it is, be robbed of all its power to torment us? The answer is just this: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus,' believe what He says is true and accept quite frankly and simply something that He has to offer.

The great plan of salvation in its height and breadth and length no man can comprehend. When we try to understand why belief in Jesus brings salvation from the guilt and death of sin, we are taken at once to His Cross. The secret of it all is there. For it was not a man who hung and suffered there; the Sufferer was the Son of God. It was not Jesus who died; it was the Lord Jesus. Faith in a dead man never could save anybody. And if Jesus had been a man and nothing more, His death would have differed in no respect from the death of any other good man who had died in loyalty to the truth. But it was the *Lord* Jesus who died.

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in.

The Cross was not a martyrdom; it was a sacrifice. In that Cross God was dealing with human sin, judging it, condemning it. All that remains for man to do now is just to accept the forgiveness.

2. Salvation is *freedom from the bondage of sin*. Sin is not simply an act of wrong bringing in its train a sense of guilt and a fear of punishment; it is also a power which tyrannizes over us and enslaves us. There is what Paul calls a 'law of sin' in our members. What must we do in order to be freed from sin's domination, to be saved from the tyranny of base instinct and passion and desire? The answer is still the same, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus.' And 'believing on the Lord Jesus,' from this point of view, means committing ourselves to Him, trusting entirely to Him. The real Greek word in this place is not 'in'; it is 'upon.' 'Believe upon the Lord Jesus,' as if you put your whole weight upon Him. Believing on Christ does not mean simply accepting the historic facts of His life. A man may believe all that as he believes in the battle of Marathon or the battle of Waterloo. Nor does it mean the acceptance of certain doctrinal statements about Him. It does not mean that we intellectually assent to the truth of His Divinity. A man may be an orthodox theologian without having a real belief at all. 'The devils,' says one of the apostles in a blunt passage, 'believe (in that sense) and tremble.' Nor yet does believing in Christ mean simply the public profession of His name. That is a good thing, but it does not mean simply that. Believing in Jesus Christ means committing yourself to Him, venturing life and eternity upon Him, casting your vote for Jesus Christ. It means to surrender your life to Him that He may shape and mould it.

¶ Readers of George Macdonald's *Malcolm* will remember the scene where Mr Graham, the devout schoolmaster, is sent for to see the Marquis of Lossie on his death-bed. He quoted the words, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,' to the dying man, but it only drew from him the reply, 'That's cant.' 'After thirty years' trial of it,' said the schoolmaster, 'it is to me the essence of wisdom. It has given me a peace which makes life or death all but indifferent to me, though I would choose the latter.' 'What am I to believe about Him, then?' 'You are to believe *on* Him, not *about* Him.' 'I don't understand.' 'He is our Lord and Master, Elder Brother, King, Saviour, the Divine Man, the human God: to believe on Him is to give ourselves up to Him in obedience, to search out His will, and do it. This is the open door to bliss.'

[1] H. T. Kerr, *The Gospel in Modern Poetry*, 183.

That is a very striking sentence in Paul's great Epistle to the Romans in which he brings both Christ's life and Christ's death into the work of saving. 'We were reconciled to God,' he says, 'by the death of his Son,' but, 'we shall be saved by his life.' We are reconciled unto God, the act of forgiveness, so to speak, by His Son; but we are saved by His life. When we believe on the Lord Jesus, we put ourselves into the hands of a living Person. And this living and redeeming Lord does really save us from the power of sin. He actually does save the miser from his greed, the coward from his weakness, the drunkard from his debasing appetite, and the profligate from his lust. He has done it in innumerable cases; He is continually doing it before our very eyes.

¶ Into the work of an Adult School George Cadbury entered whole-heartedly as a young man; he continued in the movement as an active teacher for over forty years, and he never lost his interest in it. What the Adult School meant to him is clearly indicated in the following letter:—'It was most helpful to me because I saw that religion was something really practical that brought joy and peace with it. Some people disbelieve that Jesus Christ cast out devils. I have seen this so often done by His Spirit that there is no difficulty to me to believe. Scores of men have come into our Class bad-tempered and selfish. I have in my mind two or three stiffly built fellows who were dreaded by the police because they were very strong and the police had to suffer when they dealt with them. The drinking, bad-tempered devils were cast out, and these men became gentle, loving fathers and husbands. I have seen selfish men with the selfish devil cast out become unselfish; drunken men with the drink devil cast out become sober and thoughtful; gambling men with the gambling devil cast out, spend the money, once wasted on gambling, on their wives and children. I have seen thieves and house-breakers give up their business and become good citizens; one house-breaker that I sent over to Canada asked me: "How can I possibly get back my good name?" I advised him to go to Canada and live it down; he wrote me a few years after to say that he had followed my advice and now was doing well there.'[1]

[1] *Christian Social Reformers of the Nineteenth Century*, 188.

This saving power Christ exercises by bringing His own mighty and victorious personality to bear upon these weaker personalities of ours. He enables the weak will. We know what can be done by the impact of one personality upon another even upon the human level. You remember the story that Drummond tells about an American student in Edinburgh who made friends with a Scottish student who was given to drink, and who after graduating stayed on, just because he wanted to stand by his friend. A whole year he stood by him, gave a whole year of his life to him, and before the end of the year had got him rescued. But there is no personality in the world like the personality of the Lord Jesus. There is none so mighty. There is none that can enter into such close relationship with us. For He can come and live in us, and He is always with us.

Believing in Christ carries us much further than the rescuing of a life from death; it is the re-creation of that life into holiness and purity and love. Christ not only saves us *from* something, but He saves us *into* something. Salvation really means the deliverance of the life from all meanness and pettiness, and the creation of a clean, holy, unselfish character. The greatest characters the world has seen are those which the Lord Jesus has made.

Saving Faith

Acts xvi. 30-34.—'Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house . . . and he . . . rejoiced greatly . . . having believed in God' (R.V.).

We are living at a time when to many the ordinary phrases about religious experience, which had no difficulty for the generation before us, are strange and unmeaning; when words like 'salvation' or 'faith' or 'belief in Christ' are to some of us just words which we know other people use. We hear men say, 'I don't deny that other people may have this mysterious experience; they undoubtedly seem to; but it is as undoubted that I don't have it, and, as I don't, religion can be nothing to me.' It is as if a man should say, I am not religious, as he might say, I am not musical, with the implication that that was all there was to it, and that it did not really very much matter.

In such a situation it may help us to go back to the record of the experience of the men and women to whom Christianity as a system was entirely unknown. Let us consider the story of the gaoler of Philippi. He asked what he was to do to be saved; he was told, as we are so often told now, to believe in the Lord Jesus, and the end of it was that he rejoiced greatly, having believed in God. Here are all the familiar phrases—'being saved,' 'believing in Jesus,' 'hearing the word of the Lord'; but here is something more than a string of familiar phrases strung together—here is a vivid account of a real human experience. Let us ask what the gaoler was after, and what these words which Paul and Silas spoke to him meant to him, that they were so real and arresting; and whether what happened to him had not in it something so universal that we can find present meaning in it, in spite of all our immense differences of outlook and intellectual inheritance.

1. What was he after? What did he mean by asking what he should do to be saved? It might be said that he was after something neither particularly moral nor particularly religious; that he was in a panic and desperately afraid. He was not only unmanned by the earthquake; he had been threatened with ruin and had started to lay hands on himself. Are we to say then, as some men say of all religion, that his desire to be saved was the outcome of selfish fear and nothing more; that he was a much less admirable figure than he would have been if he had calmly taken his misfortunes as something to which man is incident and in Roman fashion had fallen on his sword?

There are two things against such a reading of this passage. He came with this demand to Paul and Silas after—not before—he had been saved from material disaster. They had kept him from laying hands on himself; they had shown him that his panic was unnecessary; that the prisoners were safe, and therefore he with them. It was after that material deliverance that he came asking, 'What must I do to be saved?' Again, if what he wanted was material salvation, why should he appeal to Paul and Silas, prisoners who had been scourged and were in prison under his care? He makes his appeal to them because in this terrifying experience he had seen that they had something which he had not—a power and assurance which kept them undismayed by all that had happened to them. The gaoler did not appeal to Paul and Silas as he might have to men he felt to be essentially like himself, except that they happened to be possessed of some propitiatory magic to avert disaster. He knew himself to be in the presence of power that in the contemplation of disaster was undismayed and serene. The beginning of his religious experience was that he believed in them. Old-fashioned theology said that the conviction of sin was the first working of God upon the soul. The beginning of this man's Christian experience, as of most men's, was that conviction of sin—of an intense need of something suddenly apprehended as immediate and real—came to him with the recognition of the goodness and greatness of spiritual power as it was to be seen in the lives of men, men as naked as men could be of all other forms of power.

¶ The night before Latimer and Ridley lit at Oxford that candle which has never been put out, Ridley's anxious brother offered to spend that last terrible night with them. 'No, no, brother,' smiled the Bishop, 'I mean to lie down and sleep as gently as ever I did!' And, to the amazement of the warders who kept guard, he was as good as his word, rising in the morning from his quiet slumber to greet the flames that bore his soul to the skies![1]

2. The beginning of religious experience may be brought about, as with the gaoler, by terror at the slipping away of material safety. For it is an easy matter in this world to have been so busy while life ran smooth as to be quite blind to the existence of spiritual power, or, if we are passingly aware of it, to feel no need for it, but rather resentment at the disturbance which it brings. The complacent worldly man was the despair of Jesus as the oligarchic man was of Plato. 'The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not.' But there are moments in life when we all are susceptible to spiritual influences. The men who first followed Jesus had nothing to make them believe in Him—no authority of tradition or position—except just how He spoke and acted, and the spiritual power and assurance which shone out of Him. The gaoler of Philippi

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Golden Milestone*, 20.

found something of the same thing in Paul and Silas. If we speak of being Christians and following Christ, we can learn to do it only by coming to recognize, admire, and reverence these qualities and that spiritual power whenever and wherever it is to be found. That surely is a universal experience, common to all classes and generations, however different may be the forms in which it expresses itself.

Paul and Silas told the gaoler to believe in the Lord Jesus. What did they mean by that? Negatively, that the power they had was not their own. The man was not to believe in them. They had felt the same helplessness and need to be saved as he was feeling now. There was only one Lord, Jesus. It was from Him that the new power in their lives had come, and the gaoler must go to the same source. But what, positively, did they mean by it? Some writers on the rise of Christianity say that Paul was the author of a new religion, the cult of Jesus, as though the first disciples transformed their love and admiration for their Master into worship and deification, so that Christianity arose as the worship of Jesus, one among other instances of the deification of a hero. That is one way of regarding the matter, but it will not really bear thinking out, and it was certainly not the doctrine of Paul. No Jew could ever hold a doctrine like that. Paul held fast to the belief that our pattern and example was no abstract quality, but a life and death, and that the life and death of Jesus was the supreme revelation of the nature of God; and that what was revealed in a pre-eminent degree in the life and death of Jesus was revealed in all men who were moved by the spirit of God. 'Our fathers did all drink the same spiritual drink,' he tells the Corinthians, 'for they all drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.' So the gaoler in our story, who started by believing in Paul and Silas and was told by them to believe in the Lord Jesus, finally, after hearing the word of the Lord, rejoiced greatly, having believed in God.

3. In the attempt to give intellectual expression to this double conviction which was the basis of Christian experience, there was gradually developed an elaborate doctrine of the person of Christ. But however true these doctrinal formulations were, they are not that now. They were based upon a metaphysic which we have outgrown or at any rate abandoned, and it is hard for us to find any meaning in them. What is important for us is not to let their inadequacy blind us to the reality and truth of the experience of which they were originally the expression. Realization of their inadequacy may make it necessary for us to start where the men and women of the New Testament started. But we all can begin, if we keep our hearts and minds open to the presence of spiritual power in men's lives. And when we see the kind of power that is described in the life of Jesus in the Gospels and is to be seen in the lives of men and women to-day, and contrast our own restlessness and inadequacy with the peace and assurance which it gives, let us believe in it.

¶ Hudson Taylor was an object-lesson in quietness. He drew from the Bank of Heaven every farthing of his daily income—'My peace I give unto you.' Whatever did not agitate the Saviour, or ruffle *His* spirit was not to agitate him. The serenity of the Lord Jesus concerning any matter and at its most critical moment, this was his ideal and practical possession. He knew nothing of rush or hurry, of quivering nerves or vexation of spirit. 'I could not possibly get through the work I have to do,' he said, 'without the peace of God "which passeth all understanding" keeping my heart and mind.' [1]

¶ A youth, now a professor at Harvard University, once sought Phillips Brooks for an interview on a problem that had perplexed him. With careful thought he phrased this question that he might be sure to ask it right. When the long anticipated day arrived, he spent a radiant hour with Phillips Brooks. He came out from it transfigured, life glorious again; until at last as he went up Beacon Street toward home, it dawned on him that he had clean forgotten to ask Phillips Brooks that question. 'But,' he says, 'I did not care. I had found out that what I needed was not the solution of a special problem, but the contagion of a triumphant spirit.' [2]

Believing in this power means two things. It means admiring and revering and trying to imitate it on the one hand, but it also means trusting and surrendering ourselves to it on the other. For if we will give that power a chance

[1] *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission*, 493.
[2] H. E. Fosdick.

—so a great cloud of witnesses assures us—we shall find that it is something which we shall more and more find to give our lives strength and widening of purpose. We shall know it as something essentially expressing itself in personal lives, and also as something which transcends the lives of us and of all men.

Believing in the Lord Jesus is simple, but it is not easy. If we really believed in the power of the Spirit we should be very different people and make the world a very different place. But if we want spiritual power, we must commit ourselves to the power of the Spirit and to its demands upon us. We are tempted again and again to avoid the facing of our deepest needs and to try cheap substitutes which will engineer our lives for us sufficiently well and will ask less of us: to believe in money or government or organization or fantastic theologies ancient or modern; anything whatever which will make less demand upon us than God will do. Yet the disciples followed Jesus, and the gaoler was saved through Paul and Silas; and in the lives of men and women to-day we can, if we will, see that, having committed themselves to God, they rejoice. They are freed from weights that we too often carry with us through life, and in the strength that is given them, the yoke they have taken on themselves is easy and the burden light.

¶ 'Please God,' said an old Irishwoman in New York, 'we'll have easy times when Tillden's elected.' This is how we speak. When some party comes into power, when some new legislation is enacted, when some tangled problem is solved, there will be for us a new heaven and a new earth. But now is the day of salvation. Here, at this moment, any soul looking to Christ, and trusting in Christ, may receive the Bread that God the Father has sealed, and be satisfied. Every soul may take that peace which the world cannot give and cannot take away.[1]

The Kingship of Christ and Christian Unity

Acts xvii. 7.—'These all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.'

THE last few years have witnessed a movement of quite uncommon significance for closer unity between the different Christian Communions. Even before the war there were signs that the spirit of reconciliation was astir, signs that here and there, in catholic and evangelical circles alike, there was a longing for a more inclusive fellowship among Christians. But since the war the desire for such a fellowship has quickened, and the seeking after it in men's hearts and minds has plunged deeper. It is not only that some of the old endeavours, often representing the labours of many years, move more swiftly and surely. But new efforts have come to the birth. New appeals have been launched. New ideas have been shaped, or old ideas have found a new expression.

Such endeavours are found in greater or less degree in most churches, and among all types of Christians. Sometimes they take the form of an effort to knit a particular family of Churches more closely together, like the Methodists in England or the Presbyterians in Scotland. Sometimes they aim at securing nearer relations between denominations which, though not belonging to the same immediate family, are closely connected, like the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Congregationalists in Canada. Sometimes they represent the attempt to bring communions standing for a different faith and order of ministry into a common household, as the English Free Churches and the Church of England. Nor are the most ancient communions unaffected by the common desire, for the Orthodox Eastern Church in almost all its branches has in these recent years been turning towards the West, with its different traditions and culture. All these movements are movements in the field of Church unity.

It is impossible not to be struck by the width and the diversity of such a development as this. And yet, although these many movements are so rich in interest, and so impressive in their variety and range, we are bound to admit that, so far as the manifestation of one Universal Church in a tangible form is concerned, the vision tarries and the days which those who wait for it must wait may be many and long. We know the difficulties which, from various points of view, stand in the way of a conception of Church unity which is founded, for example, on the supremacy of the Pope, or the universal prevalence of a ministry Episcopally ordained, or the mutual recognition of existing ministries, or some other basis

[1] W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Seen and the Unseen*, 102.

of order or organization with which important questions of doctrine are bound up. And we appreciate the unsatisfactory and limited character of schemes of federation. Some of these difficulties will yield, as time goes on, are indeed yielding, to patient study, charity, and prayer. But it is not to be expected that breaches of such ancient standing can be swiftly repaired, or that the issues for which their ancestors were forced into the wilderness will be lightly admitted by earnest Christians of to-day to have lost all reality.

Are we, therefore, to infer that the Reunion of Christendom is an empty dream, and that it is waste of time to spend our efforts on what, as it seems, in its fullness must take so long to accomplish? Such a supposition is both dismally unfaithful and dismally untrue. The conclusion which we would rather draw is this:

First, with regard to the gains already made in Christian fellowship, the understandings already won, let us lay hold of them and make the most of them.

Second, as to our own Church or our own ministry, let us be willing to be humble.

Third, and above all, let us see whether we cannot at once, we Christians, show forth a unity of heart and mind and will.

1. There can be no doubt as to the reality of the progress made in understanding between different Christian communions. And for much of this a great debt is due to the Lambeth Appeal. In our own country hands have been stretched across what even a few years ago was a gulf. Never were the relations between the Church of England and the Free Churches so friendly, or the associations in work and counsel and prayer so cordial. Let us cherish and foster this friendship, and not neglect the liberty we are now allowed by ecclesiastical authority both in hearing and in preaching sermons. Further, the Church of England is now in communion with two Continental Churches, the Church of Sweden and the Old Catholic Church in Germany and Switzerland. Let us see to it that this intercommunion finds some fuller expression, and is encouraged besides by such methods as an interchange of visitors and students, of official correspondence and reports. Again, during the past few years an extraordinary sympathy has developed between the Orthodox and the Anglican Communions. Let us also take every opportunity we can to promote this friendship. And there are other Churches in Europe, both Catholic and Reformed, with which we are surely well advised to develop any *rapprochement* that already exists.

2. In addition to making the most of our Church friendships, new and old, we should show a little humility ourselves. After all, the particular Church to which each of us belongs is not wholly free from blame for the condition of broken fellowship; and it is surely conceivable that more than one Christian communion to which we are strangers, in spite of the deficiencies which we may see, has treasures and gifts and blessings of no small value to the Universal Church.

'When we have humbled ourselves to admit that some other Churches have things of no small moment to teach us and to share with us, and things it will greatly enrich us to receive and to assimilate; when we are of a Christian mind enough to admit and even to welcome thoughts and views and feelings like these—then the day of a reconstructed Christendom will have begun to dawn, at least for ourselves.' [1]

3. Let us see whether, apart from ecclesiastical unity but in no way inconsistent therewith, Christians in all communions cannot now rise up to a unity of heart and mind and will.

An eminent divine has recently lamented the *politicism* of historians of the English Church, by which he means their special concern with ecclesiastical (and sometimes secular) politics, with the struggle of factions, with attempts to suppress Puritanism, or Enthusiasm, or Liberalism, or Ritualism, with appointments to bishoprics, and debates in Convocation. And he urges that politics touch only the surface of Christianity, and that the history of a Church ought to be a biography of ideals. So perhaps the history of the Reunion of Christendom ought also to be a biography of ideals. And perhaps those efforts are most fruitful and most inspired which envisage Christian unity as above all a unity of soul, a unity of purpose.

The belief that Christ is King rises above all the reformations and breaches of the Christian Church. It is the glorious confession which

[1] Alexander Whyte.

His subjects make that His way is the true way of life, and His yoke that which all men should receive. It is a very Scriptural belief, and common to all Christians. It has been proclaimed in this peculiarly vivid way to-day by the Church of Rome. It is very good Lutheran teaching, and only a short time ago formed the burden of a sermon in an English Cathedral by the most eminent living Lutheran Churchman, the Archbishop of Upsala ; besides being glanced at in the last two of the ninety-five Theses of Martin Luther. It is a principal theme in the preaching of the greatest living Calvinist in France, Wilfred Monod. And it was this same affirmation that Christ is King, and the desire to show how the Kingship could be expressed in life and work, that drew the representatives of all Churches but Rome to the Universal Christian Conference at Stockholm.

It is true that we all believe, or appear to believe, that Christ is King. But we believe it independently, individually, not recognizing that after all it is a belief that we can hold together. Let us hold it together. And perhaps we shall give more force to our belief if we realize that it concerns us all, and in different ways requires action from us all together.

¶ Nicolas Glubokowsky, the great Russian theologian, has a parable which brings out this thought: 'The unity,' he said, 'that our Saviour loves and ordains cannot be brought about by means of mutual propaganda and conquest. It must be sought in the heights or in the depths of the communion's spiritual being.' And he took the image from his native country. 'A Russian house may be divided into several rooms by low walls. Up above there are no dividing walls ; down below the people live in separate rooms. Is unity to be gained by thrusting the walls aside so that those who live in the other rooms must either be crushed to death or leave their dwellings and enter the one that is taking possession of more and more of the floor space ? Or must they be crowded and quarrel about the space ? There is another way out of the difficulty. Let the walls remain. Each individual thrives best in his own spiritual home. One may, of course, appreciate another's home, and still remain and thrive best in one's own. No, the demand that is made of us is greater and more difficult than to increase a little, or much, at the expense of others. That which takes place to the detriment of our brethren is no real gain. Nations that live on conquest are still at a low stage of political and social culture. So is the communion which uses every means to strive for power and external conquests. Do not move the walls. But let us all grow in faith, hope, and love, so that we reach above the divisions and see and show our membership of the same Church and congregation of Christ '—of Christ the King !

¶ Not until there is a Church like some great cathedral in which there are a multitude of side-chapels where the one God is worshipped in different ways by differently minded people, and yet all are within the One Church, is there any hope of Christianity prevailing. Not until the values of Christ and the Spirit of Christ are accepted by Christian people as the one unifying centre around which all loyalties are grouped can we talk of offering our world the Christian religion.[1]

The Open Mind

Acts xvii. 11.—'Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so' (R.V.).

In the text we have a picture of how the apostolic preaching was received. Two classes of hearers are distinguished. The one, that of the Jews of Thessalonica, meet Paul's message with firm hostility, refuse to consider it on its merits, fix their undivided attention on that aspect of it which most offends their prejudices ; give themselves up to the fierce and reckless temper of jealousy ; and, finally, have recourse to violence in order to suppress the gospel. They will not listen ; still less will they weigh arguments ; they will only oppose. The other class, that of the Bercœans, behave in a very different manner. They certainly had as much reason to dislike the gospel as their Thessalonian neighbours, for they also were Jews and devout students of their sacred books. The religious study of the Bercœans, however, had induced in them a humbler disposition than the mere enjoyment of privilege is apt to encourage. They are prepared to learn that new and amazing develop-

[1] H. R. L. Sheppard, *The Impatience of a Parson*, 197.

ments have been ordained of God for Israel; and though they feel keenly the affront which the Apostle's teaching inflicts upon their traditional notions of religion, they will not refuse to give a fair hearing to a message professedly based on the Scriptures. This readiness to listen with patience, and examine with candour, is the special claim of the Berœans to be accounted 'noble,' that is, as the Greek word must be literally rendered, 'gentlemen.'

¶ When the 'Pilgrim Fathers' of Puritanism were about to set sail for America, there to lay the foundations of that great Republic which is so closely united with ourselves in sentiment and interest, it is said that John Robinson, whom a numerous Christian Church now reveres as 'the father of the Independents,' addressed to them the following speech:—'Brethren, we are now quickly to part from one another, and whether I may ever live to see your faces on earth any more, the God of heaven only knows: but whether the Lord has appointed that or no, I charge you before God and His blessed angels, that you follow me no further than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ. If God reveal anything to you, by any other instrument of His, be as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive any truth by my ministry: for I am verily persuaded, the Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of His holy word. For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go at present no farther than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw; whatever part of His will our God has revealed to Calvin, they will rather die than embrace it; and the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things. This is a misery much to be lamented, for though they were burning and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God, but were they now living, would be as willing to embrace farther light as that which they first received.'[1]

1. It is not the credulity of the Berœans that is commended by the Apostle but their courtesy and candour. In every age, but most of all in those ages which are marked by widely-diffused scepticism, there are multitudes of credulous people who are ready to accept anything that is urged upon them with sufficient insistence. There is nothing creditable, nothing Christian in credulity: it is to Christian faith what servility is to courtesy, what superstition is to religion, what vanity is to self-respect. It has a certain superficial resemblance, since both credulity and Christian faith imply the acceptance of some external teaching, but there the resemblance ends. Faith is the temper of deliberate, responsible, intelligent acceptance, as it were the affixing of a signature after due thought and with full consciousness of all that is involved. Credulity is the temper of a shallow and facile acceptance at second-hand, as it were the affixing of a signature reproduced by lithography, or some other mechanical device, and extensively circulated for purposes of advertisement, or business, without inquiry and without sense of responsibility. Many are very scornful of credulity, and yet are far, indeed, from the 'noble' temper of courteous and candid inquiry. The Thessalonians were not credulous, but they were certainly not rational. To refuse to listen is not less irrational than to accept without examination: and it is scarcely less common. In one respect, indeed, it is more discreditable. Few people, however credulous, are accustomed to make a boast of their credulity, but most people of narrow and obstinate minds are in the habit of priding themselves on their inaccessibility to new ideas. They exult in their consistency, when they should lament their unteachableness.

The Berœans appear to have been equally removed from the folly of credulity and the conceit of prejudice. They listened to the gospel with an open mind—disciplined and reverent—able therefore to realize its own limitations, and to venerate the convictions of others. They listened 'with all readiness of mind,' but they did not there and then without further reflection believe the gospel. They brought it to the test of the Scriptures—in this case, the right test, since the gospel professed to be the true exposition of the Scriptures; and only when, after examining the Scriptures, they had found that the gospel justified its claim did they own themselves disciples.

The fair criticism of new propositions requires that the right test should be applied: that is, the test which the nature of the proposition

[1] D. Neal, *The History of the Puritans*, i. 476 f.

permits. We read earlier in the narrative that Paul supported his message by an appeal to Scripture; therefore it was right that the Scriptures should be the authority to which the Bereans should have recourse when they desired to test the truth of that message. This elementary rule of reason and fair play has been often ignored by Christians, who have thus been led into very grievous wrongdoing. When the English public gave way to a religious panic after the publication of Darwin's great books, *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*, it was repeating the error of the Thessalonian bigots who persecuted Paul. Instead of calmly applying the right test to the new scientific theories, it raised a tumult and indulged in angry denunciation. The appeal to the text of Genesis was not less irrelevant than irrational. The Bible is not the authority in scientific inquiries: to bring these to the test of Scripture is on the face of it to perpetrate an injustice, and an act of folly also. It is of the first importance, then, that we should make sure that in criticising new propositions we are applying the right test.

2. We have our Thessalonians still, men who will not listen to the message of Christianity, who will sweep it aside with a contemptuous epigram, and assume that the confidence of their own rejection demonstrates the soundness of their argument. They defeated Paul: they are proof against the reasoning of religious men still. Happily these do not exhaust the number of modern hearers. We have also our Bereans, nobler souls, who are on the watch for Divine messages, who listen with attention, and consider with candour, and inquire with patience.

¶ 'I observe,' wrote Jonathan Edwards in his Diary, 'that old men seldom have any advantage of new discoveries, because these discoveries are beside a way of thinking they have long been used to. Resolved, therefore, that if ever I live to years I will be impartial to hear the reason of all pretended discoveries, and receive them, if rational, how long soever I have been used to another way of thinking.'

In these days when from so many sides, and by such various instruments, Almighty God is pouring on us the light of new knowledge, it is this temper of mind which we should most earnestly desire and most carefully cherish. To have an open mind in the Christian sense is to have a mind to which unaccustomed truth is welcome because we venerate truth for its own sake, and have learned in the school of experience that our only hope of holding any truth is to be accessible to the appeal of all truth, and that we do violence to the distinctive principle of the Christian religion when we admit to our minds the timorous and irrational supposition that as Christians we can have any separate interest from that of honest and reverent seekers after truth. Christ, the Truth Incarnate, commissions all genuine scientific investigation, and gathers into His message all the sound conclusions to which it leads; and Christians are, in a world enslaved by prejudice, ignorance, and the servitude of unrighteousness, as men enfranchised and illuminated. 'With freedom did Christ set us free,' cries the Apostle; 'stand fast, therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage.' We may not be able to correlate all the separate testimonies of truth which claim our acceptance; but we may not reject any, and, for the rest, we make an act of faith in the Truth Incarnate, and rest in hope.

¶ Sainte Beuve mentions that some one asked Jansen one day which Divine Attribute most deeply impressed his mind. He replied '*Truth*.' 'He meditated continually on that subject; he sought truth night and day in his studies; and sometimes, in his rare moments of relaxation, while walking in his garden he was heard crying aloud, with eyes lifted to heaven and a deep sigh escaping from his breast: "O Truth! O Truth!"'[1]

The Implications of the Resurrection

Acts xvii. 18.—'He preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.'

THE Athenians were evidently not very clear as to the distinction existing between the person of Christ and the doctrine of the Resurrection. They seem to have confused the Resurrection with the foreign divinities they charged Paul with setting forth, and to have thought the Resurrection one of the foreign demons. But the fact of their thus describing the ministry of the Apostle shows what a

[1] Jane T. Stoddart, *The New Testament in Life and Literature*, 229.

prominent place the doctrine of the Resurrection occupied in that ministry. 'Jesus' was evidently a conspicuous theme in his preaching, and 'the resurrection of the dead' was not less a salient feature. The two subjects went together in the great apostolic message. The fact and import of the resurrection of Christ, and of the resurrection of His people in Him, are interwoven with all the writings of the Apostles, as they were with all their preaching. We see, then, that the resurrection of our Lord was to the Apostles a great, fundamental, essential fact, on the truth of which they were prepared to stake everything for time and eternity.

Thus recognized as historic fact it has demonstrated its power in some other resurrections, and these others are mighty witnesses to the fact and glory of the primal historic resurrection.

1. Note the power of Christ's resurrection *in the sphere of truth.* We are accustomed to speak of truth as though it were necessarily a living thing. We deceive ourselves on this matter with quite a number of aphorisms. 'Truth is mighty, and it prevails' is one of those maxims from which we derive great consolation. As though truth were always invincible, aggressive, realizing, prevailing! Yet what is clearer than the fact that the very greatest truths remain for ages utterly impotent and unavailing? Now, in this sphere of inanimate truth the power of Christ's resurrection is marvellously displayed.

We see its revivifying action upon Judaism. Compared with the religions of the surrounding nations, the faith of the Jew was pre-eminent; its revelation of the righteous God, its insistence on the principle of holiness, its foreshadowing of immortality, invested it with unique authority and glory. Yet in course of time it 'waxed old,' it became ineffective and obstructive, it cumbered the ground, and the torch of Titus cremated it. But in the resurrection of Jesus Christ Judaism arose from its ashes in transfiguration splendour. Its sacred literature palpitated with a strange power; its temple became a living church; its laws were vivified by the law of the spirit of life; from the insignificance of a provincial cult it passed into supreme and universal authority and influence. Judaism, spiritualized, energized, glorified in Christ Jesus, became the supreme factor in the moral life of mankind. He who is the Resurrection and the Life called it forth from its temple tomb and winding-sheet of formalism to world-conquering power.

We see its effect in heathen lands. Only as the gospel of the Resurrection is preached in heathen lands will the various faiths of the pagan be fulfilled. The students of comparative religion remind us of the Divine doctrine found in the ethnic scriptures; they abundantly prove that these scriptures contain many great truths expressed with remarkable lucidity and beauty. But those best acquainted with the East declare that these ancient faiths no longer serve the nations which hold them; they are practically dead so far as concerns any influence they might once have exerted upon the moral and spiritual life of the people. It is, then, only as the truths implied in the resurrection of Christ are proclaimed that these incomplete and inoperative faiths will reach their consummation.

Again, many truths held by our scientists, statesmen, philosophers, and social reformers assert themselves feebly, if they assert themselves at all. They are called by Lord Bacon 'Bedridden truths.' What will give them life? The enforcement and reception of the doctrines symbolized by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If the great truths latent in paganism, illustrated by science, inculcated by sociology and legislation, are to become authoritative and fruitful, they will have to be related to God, rooted in the eternal righteousness, vivified by the hope of immortality. So much truth is paralysed and powerless because it has been divorced from the love, righteousness, and promise of the living God; and it is only as the risen Christ relates it once more to God and eternity, and baptizes it with fire, that it lives, kindles, coerces, and transfigures.

2. Consider the power of Christ's resurrection as demonstrated *in the sphere of righteousness.* The great design of the Advent was to establish among us a Divine righteousness; and the distinct teaching of the New Testament is that in Christ's death lies the destruction of sin, and in His resurrection the power of holiness. Everywhere in the New Testament the Resurrection enforces the claims of righteousness. It appeals directly and exclusively to the conscience. It calls for righteousness—sincere, essential, living righteousness in spirit

and conduct. 'We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the father, so we also might walk in newness of life.' Purity of the body, of the life, of the mind, such purity as will bear the Divine eye, is the obvious implication of the Resurrection.

Speaking of Greece, Renan writes: 'Her philosophers, while dreaming of the immortality of the soul, were tolerant towards the iniquities of this world.' How diametrically opposed to the method of the Apostles! With them the immortality of the soul passed from a dream into a supreme article of faith; and they never for a moment failed to employ it as a grand moral dynamic: they became more than ever intolerant towards the iniquities of this world, and in the vaster horizon that had opened to them they found a splendid inspiration making possible a holiness which paganism could neither prompt nor sustain.

The moral systems of the ancients were fatally weak. But, when we turn to the New Testament, we are conscious that a new moral force has entered into the world. By His triumph over sin and death, which all who believe in Him are to share; by revealing the love of God, by converting the intimation of immortality into a glorious certainty, Jesus Christ brought new motives, inspirations, enthusiasms, into the sphere of human life and duty, rendering obedience to the moral law possible and delightful.

¶ Captain Scott, in *The Voyage of the 'Discovery,'* graphically describes the beautiful ice flowers which are a feature of the Arctic regions. It was on one Easter Sunday that he witnessed the grandest display, 'This is a season of flowers, and behold! they have sprung up about us as by magic: very beautiful ice flowers, waxen white in the shadow, but radiant with prismatic colours where the sun-rays light on their delicate petals.'

Are not these ice flowers of the Arctic seas a parable of the moral systems of Jew and Greek, of Hindu and Chinese, and of the utilitarian morality of our own day? 'Clear-cut and perfect in form,' of 'mathematical precision,' often touched with 'the prismatic colours' of imagination and emotion, are the maxims and systems of the philosophical moralists; but the mystic element called life is missing. How different are morals in the sphere of which the risen Christ is the central light! On Easter Day the Sun of Righteousness arose on the frosted moral universe, turning its ghostly winter flowers into summer flowers—pulsating with life, rich in energy, radiant with beauty. On that morning a breath of life, a thrill of power, stirred the whole realm of morals, and every law and precept of righteousness felt the quickening Spirit.

3. Think also of the power of Christ's resurrection as demonstrated *in the sphere of civilization.* According to Carlyle, 'A nation of degraded men cannot be raised up except by what we rightly name a miracle.' This is the doctrine of Scripture. Men can be raised only by a miracle, and that miracle is the resurrection of our Lord, which gives to the people a new conception of themselves, awakes in them lofty hopes, and opens to them new foundations of moral strength.

There are preachers to-day who ignore the great evangelical facts and doctrines, because they think that something practical and immediate is wanted. The doctrine of the resurrection of Christ is supposed to be far away from the pressing, practical needs of the people; so they leave the unfruitful dogma, and betake themselves to the setting forth of economic theories and the discussion of political policies. But, in fact, our Lord's resurrection lies at the very root of all social, political, and industrial problems. How strikingly this comes out at Pentecost! 'And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all. For neither was there among them any that lacked; for as many as were possessed of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need.' How significantly the doctrine of the Resurrection stands at the centre of this passage! Has it not a great moral for our day? The vital truths symbolized by the resurrection of our Lord contain the solution of the wage question, the land question, and the rest of the

social and economic questions which reformers vainly strive to settle irrespective of the spiritual truths which underlie all human society. He is the truest reformer who preaches most powerfully to the soul, and sets all life in the light of the Resurrection.

¶ Perhaps the most touching sight I ever witnessed was the crowd of Russian pilgrims at the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. Those peasants travelled thousands of miles and braved untold hardships that they might behold the sacred place. With intense eagerness, with profoundest reverence, with tears streaming down their cheeks, they sought and kissed the sacred shrine. With their poverty and sorrow, bleeding under many injustices, aspiring after liberty and privilege, they had found their way to the Lord's tomb. Their instinct was true. The power to raise a nation of trampled and degraded men is in the truths symbolized by that sepulchre and in the pentecostal power of the risen Lord.[1]

An Unknown God

Acts xvii. 22, 23.—'Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.'

THESE words form the introduction to Paul's address on the Areopagus. Driven to Athens by the violence of his enemies, and awaiting the arrival of his friends, the Apostle had given himself to the quiet study of the religious aspects around him. As he issued morning by morning from his humble lodging, he beheld 'the severe beauty of the Parthenon, the massive proportions of the Theseum, the exquisite elegance of the Temple of Wingless Victory, the rude grace and sinewy strength of the youthful processions, portrayed on frieze and entablature, and sharply defined in the sunny air.' But, as he passed, his special interest was attracted by the objects of their worship, the inscriptions on their altars, and the discussions of Jew and Proselyte, of Stoic and Epicurean, concerning the sacred mysteries of religion.

1. Athens was a city of statues, and Paul's early training as a Jew prejudiced him against all representations of the human form. But even these aroused less indignation than the images of the gods and goddesses, and the altars erected to their worship, which confronted him on every side. So numerous were the representations of the deities of the Pantheon that it was said to be more easy to meet a god than a man in the streets of Athens. Whichever way the visitor turned, an altar confronted him, at which devotees were making their offerings. Small wonder, then, that the spirit of the Apostle was provoked within him as he beheld the city full of idols.

But there was no passionate show of resentment in his speech. With admirable sagacity and good sense Paul seized on the one hopeful sign in it all, that the people whom he was addressing were very eager and sensitive about religious matters. He was careful to place this sentiment in the forefront of his address. The rendering of the Authorized Version, 'I perceive, men of Athens, that in all things ye are too superstitious,' is inadmissible. Even the 'somewhat religious' of the Revised Version does not meet the case. 'Unusually religious' would be a truer rendering of the Greek.

It seemed to Paul as though the profusion of idols around him, and especially the altar reared to 'an unknown God,' were proofs of the strong and instinctive cravings of a religious spirit. Here was a whole nation seeking God if haply they might feel after Him; and the word employed is extremely picturesque, suggesting the fumbling of a blind man to find the latch of the door. Tennyson hit off the conception with apt grace in his well-known lines:—

> I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
> And gather dust and chaff, and call
> To what I feel is Lord of all.

¶ If rightly restored, the inscription [on a recently discovered altar at Pergamum]

> 'To unknown gods
> Capito,
> torchbearer'

tells us that about a century after the foundation of the Christian Church at Pergamum, Capito, a priest of Demeter of Pergamum, who officiated as 'torchbearer' at her mysteries,

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Fatal Barter*, 158.

dedicated the altar to 'unknown' gods. In some way or another—it may be easily imagined from many analogous dedications that a hint had been received in a dream—Capito had become convinced that he was under obligation to gods whose names were not revealed to him. He showed his appreciation by giving them an 'anonymous' altar. No doubt the Athenian altar which made so deep an impression on the Apostle Paul also originated in the same sort of way—in gratitude to 'an' unknown god, the gift of an Athenian whose name stood perhaps beneath the line that St Paul quoted. The missionary of the ancient world does not of course interpret the words as a modern epigraphist would. He interprets them, as he does the Greek Old Testament, with a strong interest in their deeper meaning, the same that he afterwards extracts from the poet's words,

For we are also his offspring.

That which according to the letter applied to 'an' unknown god thus becomes to the Apostle an unconscious anticipation of 'the' unknown God.[1]

2. It was a bold thing that Paul did when he stood up to tell the men of Athens the nature of the true God. The philosophers of an earlier time, such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, had had some splendid visions of the truth, but they had not done much to enlighten the people. In the world of Paul's day there were 'gods many and lords many'; and yet there was nothing that the world of Paul's day so greatly needed as the knowledge of the true God, and there is nothing that the world of our own day more greatly needs.

Now, we can know God only in so far as He reveals Himself.

(1) He is partly *revealed in Nature*; but if we stop with Nature we shall come short of the knowledge of a God who is really higher than ourselves. For man is more than Nature. Paul certainly pointed the Athenians to God as the Creator of the world who, just because He is 'Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.' He declared His omnipresence and nearness to all, 'for in him we live and move and have our being.' So far, his teaching might be expressed in terms of the Eastern fable of the fishes who sought to behold the sea:

O ye who seek to solve the knot,
Ye live in God, yet know Him not;
Ye sit upon the river's brink,
Yet crave in vain a drop to drink;
Ye dwell beside a countless store,
Yet perish hungry at the door.

The revelation of God in Nature is that of an omnipresent, all-embracing, all-working Power, an Infinite Reason which is manifested in the unvarying order of the world.

(2) But Paul went on to declare that *in Jesus Christ God had revealed Himself in His moral character*, as the God of Righteousness. If He had overlooked the ignorance of the past, He would do so no longer; for He had 'appointed a day in which he would judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he had ordained; whereof he had given assurance to all men in that he had raised him from the dead.' Righteousness was the ruling passion in Paul's soul, and as he looked around on that world of many gods and of much wickedness, his spirit was mightily stirred to declare to it a God of righteousness who should judge the world righteously.

3. Righteousness was an aspect of the true God which that world needed greatly to know. It is an aspect of God which should shine upon the men of all time with the clearness of the sun in the heavens. And it needs to be specially emphasized to-day. For there is much that seems to contradict it. There is the low condition, the ignorance, suffering and degradation in which so many human beings have for so long been left, and in which their very religion, in which they seemed to be groping after God, has often kept them, with no light from without shining upon them; the bloodshed and cruelty that have marked man's path throughout his history; the dreadful crimes that have been neither averted nor visibly avenged; in short, the actual condition of the human world amid what seems the awful silence of a God said to be everywhere present, righteous, all powerful.

But let us note well the fact that we do feel this difficulty, that we have become conscious that there is something higher and better,

[1] A. Deissmann, *St Paul*, 261, 265.

something diviner than what is manifested in Nature and human history. This is a very important matter, for it is the revelation of God within ourselves, the evidence of a higher Life moving in us, of the reality of which we do not need argument to convince us. Those higher feelings, that sense of the supremacy of righteousness and love, have been wrought into us by the Power that forms us men.

(1) The righteous God is an *immanent* God. The revelation of the true God in Christ teaches us that man is God's organ, God's son to learn and to give expression to the Will of his Father. The reason why the world is not better than it is, and why individual lives often remain on such a low level, is because men have been looking too exclusively to a God outside themselves, slow to learn where the living God is, or, having learned, reluctant to do His will, because, perhaps, it called for sacrifice.

¶ Whittier said: 'I am thankful to the Divine providence which placed me where I am with an unshaken faith in the Light within—the immanence of the Divine Spirit in Christianity, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."'[1]

¶ Florence Nightingale wrote in 1854, shortly before her call to the Crimea came: 'The kingdom of God is within us. These words seem to me the most of a revelation, of a New Testament, of a gospel—of any that are recorded to have been spoken by our Saviour.'[2]

The power of the revelation of God in Christ is in the fact that Jesus stopped not short of the complete sacrifice of Himself in order to do the Will of God. Moreover, since it was the very life of God that moved in Christ, we see God Himself in Christ accepting and submitting to the actual order of the Universe, and in that Divine silence which makes human life often seem so dark and tragical, enduring the worst that man can do to man, suffering the result in this life of the sin of humanity.

He glows above
With scarce an intervention, presses close
And palpitatingly, His soul o'er ours:
We feel Him, nor by painful reason know!
The everlasting minute of creation
Is felt there; now it is, as it was then;
All changes at His instantaneous will,
Not by the operation of a law
Whose maker is elsewhere at other work.
His hand is still engaged upon His world—
Man's praise can forward it, man's prayer suspend,
For is not God all-mighty? To recast
The world, erase old things and make them new,
What costs it Him? So, man breathes nobly there.[1]

(2) But the revelation in Christ shows us that the true God is also *transcendent*. He was not merely within Jesus by His Spirit, He was at the same time the Father to whom Jesus prayed, and whose Will He ever sought to do. Immanence is not Identity. Man is not himself God, nor the only temple of His presence. Otherwise there would be no God above us to worship, and whose will it is ours to do. As Eckhardt says: 'The fundamental thought is the real distinction between God and the world, together with their real inseparability; for only really distinct elements can interpenetrate each other.' As with the growing plant, its life-principle is at once *in* it as the vital energy (spirit of life) which it obeys in its development, and *above* it as the Ideal to be realized in its perfection, so is it with man in relation to God. As Jesus taught, the ideal of our life is nothing short of God Himself in the form of sonship towards Him and likeness to Him. It is only when this ideal is reached that man is 'one with God,' and that in man the immanent Divine is one with the transcendent. It was this that was realized in Christ and manifested in the culmination of His life in the sacrifice of the Cross.

But if God be above us all and everywhere present, why does He not do the things we should naturally expect Him to do? The answer is that God is *Spirit*, and can only express Himself and act in or on the world through some material embodiment. His Spirit can influence our spirits, and through us He can act. Here is our responsibility.

What we need so much for our life is to believe in and realize the presence of God, both as a Holy Spirit within us and as the Infinite Spirit 'around us ever.' His presence within makes itself felt in that something that would always lift us higher and lead us to follow and act out that *Best* which has ever the supreme

[1] Mrs King Lewis, *Life of Whittier*.
[2] E. T. Cook, *Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 307.

[1] Browning, *Luria*.

claim upon us. His presence without is revealed in the Providence that orders our life, in that higher Will which we cannot alter or resist, in trustful acceptance of which in everything we alone can have peace; and in that Greater, Wiser and Better than ourselves whom the heart craves for, and whom it finds in prayer, to whom we can commit our way, and find 'the peace of God which passeth all understanding guarding our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.' 'This is the true God and eternal life.' We cannot *see* God, but

High above the limits of my seeing,
And folded far within the inmost heart,
And deep below the deeps of conscious being,
Thy splendour shineth; there, O God, Thou art.

Agnosticism

Acts xvii. 23.—'TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.'

1. THE word *agnostic* is quite a modern word. It was coined by Professor Huxley and was suggested by the words of our text. It is very significant that the view of things which utterly denies all revelation should have had to borrow its title from the Bible. An atheist has the courage of conviction. He lifts up his eyes and says there is no God. For him, heaven is a vacant place, and there is no eternal Personality. But the agnostic does not deny there is a God. All he asserts is that we cannot reach Him.

This agnostic attitude has nothing in common with Christian humility. It does not spring from the majesty of God, but from the limitations of our finitude. There are octaves of sound, in high and sunken registers, which no human ear is capable of hearing, yet to say that a thousand tones are imperceptible is not at all to say that man is deaf. And so the Christian reverently holds that there are heights and depths in God he cannot know, and yet he is convinced that God is knowable. Indeed, for the Christian consciousness, there is no such intense reality as God. He is nearer than breathing, closer than hands and feet, more subtly present than any summer morning; and this though logic be powerless to reach and argument ineffectual to demonstrate Him, and life, in all the seeming tangle of it, too intricate a riddle to reveal Him. 'And when I saw him,' says John, 'I fell at his feet as dead'; there were depths in the infinite which overwhelmed him. Yet that same John—with what triumphant certainty does he ring out the clarion cry, *We know*. And this is the glory of our Christian faith that, with the fullest confession of great ignorance, it can yet lift up its voice out of the darkness and say, 'I know whom I have believed.'

¶ Archdeacon Farrar once asked Robert Browning whether there were any lines in all the wide range of his poetry which most completely expressed what was fundamental in his thought and life. 'Yes,' replied the poet, 'and they are these:—

He at least believed in soul,
Was very sure of God.'

My father also was very sure of God, and was convinced that every man might enjoy a similar certainty if he really wanted to, and if he would tread the common road, beaten by the feet of generations of the pilgrims of faith, by which it may be reached.[1]

2. It is significant that the wheel of antagonism has now come full circle. This last subversal of the Christian faith is the intellectual negation of the first. When the new gospel was fighting for its life it had one foe more deadly than all others. It sapped the spiritual life of congregations, and blighted the promise of countless catechumens. And this so subtle and insidious enemy, with which the infant Church fought for its life, was called by the forgotten name of Gnosticism. The singular thing is that the Christian faith, which began by battling against a spurious knowledge, should now have to battle against a spurious ignorance. This is a very hopeful sign for the ultimate triumph of the gospel, for there is less hope for the man who says that he knows everything than for him who thinks that he knows nothing. For the one is unteachable, and in a world like this to be unteachable is to be condemned; but the other has at least the aspect of humility. That is why in early Gnosticism the prevailing temper was one of scornful arrogance. And that is why in our modern Agnosticism we can so often detect a note of wistfulness.

[1] H. Varley, *Henry Varley's Life-Story*, 242.

¶ We find Symonds at twenty-seven years of age (1867) saying, 'I would give a great deal to regain the Christian point of view, or rather, since all modern people are ethically Christian—the personal, creative, conscious Deity. But I nowhere find Him. I see that this age has no definition of Him.'[1]

3 At Gnosticism we all smile to-day; but at Agnosticism no one thinks to smile. And what we suggest is that this is only explicable on the ground of a certain specious affinity between the negative creed of the agnostic and the general spirit of the age.

(1) The first attraction of Agnosticism is that it seems to answer readily to our altered thought of the dwelling-place of man. 'What is man, that thou art mindful of him' has meaning for us the Psalmist never knew. So long as man deemed that the world which he inhabited was the great and glorious centre of the universe, so long was it natural for him to hold that he was important in the eyes of heaven. But if his dwelling-place be but an atom, flying through boundless space where worlds are numberless, then things assume a different complexion. Now that is exactly what modern science has done. It has dislodged our world from its centrality. It has robbed us of our cosmical importance, and made us the creatures of a tiny planet. And it was inevitable that this altered thought, which has so profoundly influenced man's attitude to Nature, should have influenced also his attitude to God. It was natural to believe that God was knowable when just beyond the clouds He had His throne. But heaven has gone very far away now, and we sweep the depths of space and cannot find it. And so, having learned, on evidence unquestioned, the actual insignificance of earth, we begin to doubt the significance of man. It is to that temper Agnosticism comes. It is the creed which answers that suspicion. It is not presumptuous as was atheism. It does not dare to say there is no God. It only says that for creatures such as we are, fashioned of the dust of a little distant planet, the proper attitude is one of ignorance.

But if men would only think a little, they would see the fallacy of that appeal. It is not the dwelling-place that makes the man; it is the man that makes the dwelling-place. There may be depths of meanness in the lordliest home, and moral grandeur in the poorest shieling. And to argue that man must be a cipher because the world is not a lordly dwelling-place, is like arguing that Burns was not a genius because he was a cottage-child. On the contrary, it seems that the evidence is the other way. For it is not in palaces or in lordly manors that moral and spiritual worth is oftenest found. It is in humble homes with lowly roofs, which have no beauty that we should desire them, and which never obtrude themselves upon the passer-by. And so to argue that God cannot be known, unless the world be the castle of the universe, is to move contrary to all experience.

(2) But there is another attraction of Agnosticism which helps to explain its prevalence to-day. It is in apparent harmony with an age that cannot brook the accent of finality. Whatever the cause be, this at least is plain, that men to-day are not in love with dogmatism. They may have a wistful yearning for the Christ; but they are easily irritated at the creed. They do not accept the sufficiency of formulas. They are no longer held by orthodox beliefs. They are impatient at the suggestion of finality. That there is a nobler side to this impatience it is only fair to recognize. It is always the characteristic of an age that is trembling on the verge of discoveries.

But the curious thing is that Agnosticism has proved itself the most intolerant of dogmatisms. Professing to be the foe of all finality, it is itself the most final of all creeds. Through all the ages the gospel has maintained itself with an infinite and living power of adaptation. It has responded to all the growth of knowledge and never forfeited its central verities. But Agnosticism in these past fifty years—and what are fifty years to twenty centuries—has only saved itself from utter ruin by the very dogmatism which it scorns. To say we have no evidence for God may sound like intellectual humility. It may seem to indicate a very different temper from the blatant atheism of the past. But when one is dealing not with things but with *persons*, to say that one has no proof of their existence is really to deny that they exist. There might be gold under the snows of Greenland though we had no evidence that gold was there. But if there were little children in a home, would they not be certain

[1] Horatio Brown, *John Addington Symonds*.

to betray their presence? And if we found no nursery, nor cot, nor picture books, nor fragmentary toys, would not that mean there were no children there? That would be the verdict of the briefest visit: but what if we lived for years within the dwelling and never found one proof that there were children? To find no evidence is to be driven to deny their being; and as with little children, so with God. If even a ship-wrecked sailor on an island leaves unmistakable traces of his presence, how much more the Creator of the universe.

'Show me your God!' the doubter cries.
I point him out the smiling skies;
I show him all the woodland greens;
I show him peaceful sylvan scenes;
I show him winter snows and frost;
I show him waters tempest-tossed;
I show him hills rock-ribbed and strong;
I bid him hear the thrush's song;
I show him flowers in the close—
The lily, violet and rose;
I show him rivers, babbling streams;
I show him youthful hopes and dreams;
I show him stars, the moon, the sun;
I show him deeds of kindness done;
I show him joy, I show him care,
And still he holds his doubting air,
And faithless goes his way, for he
Is blind of soul, and cannot see![1]

Where Agnosticism fails is that it has never been able to maintain itself. It has either gravitated very near atheism, or it has crept back to the feet of God again. Surely the truth must lie with a creed that has stood the storm and shock of centuries. And when it meets our deepest need, by it we are content to live and die. Life is too difficult and dark and terrible to be fought out by what we do not know. It is when we can say after the strain of years, 'I know whom I have believed,' that our feet are planted on the rock.

Brotherhood in the Cross

Acts xvii. 26.—'God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.'

1 Cor. ii. 2.—'For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.'

If we go back to those first days of the Christian Society recorded in the Acts of the Apostles we find a company of men and women, unknown and unlettered, without worldly support or influence, fired with a passion and enthusiasm that has no parallel in history. Before it the whole structure of the Roman Empire, with its slavery and cruelty and callous indifference to the wrongs from which millions suffered, swayed and fell, and in its place a new structure was built up, founded on the doctrine of the equality of all men in the sight of God. For so it was that they had learnt Christ.

What is this religion of Brotherhood? What does it imply? How can it be discovered and practised? A suggestive and in some ways startling reply to these questions is found in a comparison between the two declarations of Paul at Athens and at Corinth. In both his theme is the same, the brotherhood of men, but in the one case the result was a splendid failure, and in the other a glowing success. To us, confronted with what has been so widely called the failure of organized Christianity to attach men to religion, the parallel may give room and stimulus to thought, as well as pause for careful and serious consideration.

1. We may well believe that Paul's heart beat high when he entered the famous city—Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of Arts. On the road that led him in he noticed many altars, and in the market-place where he watched the business of the day he heard the chattering of slaves, men and women made in the image of God, but regarded in Athens, that mighty seat of culture and learning, as mere goods or cattle, possessing neither human feelings nor immortal souls. His spirit was stirred within him, and when utterance was given him he broke out into an impassioned declaration of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of men. Certainly what he said was both novel and arresting. And how inspiring it was! The vision of a unity of all mankind in the God who created and sustained and would one day judge them was a theme to inspire the enthusiasm of the most indifferent in his audience. It ought to have been convincing also. For this God had intervened in human affairs in the person of Jesus Christ, Himself the Divine Son, and in His resurrection from the dead had given an assurance of a judgment to come. In view of all this, God was calling men everywhere to repent; only

[1] John Kendrick Bangs.

by their so doing could the day dawn of the universal Brotherhood of Man. But in spite of the sublime argument so steadily maintained and the burning passion of the preacher's heart, there was little response. Paul departed from Athens a disappointed and disillusioned man.

So he crosses to Corinth, the home of industry and commerce, the proud market-place of Greece, its imperial and cosmopolitan centre. Men of all nations met in its streets and trafficked in its marts. Here was 'the Empire in miniature'; every interest, political, commercial, intellectual, religious, was represented in it. What is the Apostle to say to these people? Shall he repeat the message he had brought to Athens and begin again the argument, so subtle and irrefutable, with which he had sought to win the allegiance of the cultured Athenians to the gospel of Christ? We need not ask, for he himself tells us. 'When I came to Corinth,' he says, 'I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.'

But though the setting was new, the theme was the same as before, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man. Newly created as the city was, it was likely to be democratic and independent. The population was as varied as any of our great seafaring cities—Italians, Greeks, Jews, Orientals, adventurers from all parts were there, and to all these he preached the gospel that made all men stand equally without merit before a God who had no respect of persons. Was there ever a more incredulous audience in front of a preacher? And yet the Apostle preached on. Too careless to be intolerant they let him have his way. So he preached till he prevailed, till into the heart of the proud Greek there stole a new humility of spirit and he embraced a nobler wisdom than his fathers had known, till the Jew felt the wonder of a love that was as wide as the world breaking into his soul, till the Roman guided himself to a Lord in whose will was his peace and the peace of all mankind.

And then the wonderful thing happened. The old divisions were broken down, the old antipathies healed, and a new sense of brotherhood was born in them. They knew that they were all one in Christ Jesus. And this consciousness of brotherhood grew and reached out beyond the limits of Corinth. Tidings came of poverty and distress in Jerusalem. Now Corinth had no dealings with Jerusalem; they were strangers to each other—but the new sense of brotherhood knit them to those whom they had never seen in the flesh. If one member suffer all suffer with it. The riches of Corinth were put at the service of the poverty of Jerusalem. That is the contrast between Athens and Corinth—the brotherhood that was not and the brotherhood that was. What made the difference? Did it all lie, Paul himself being witness, in the emphasis of his two utterances? The one was an attempted explanation of the providential ordering of the universe; the other was a simple telling of the story of the Cross. Has it not something to say to us to-day? Does it not bid us remember that God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways?

If the brotherhood of men is to be more than a beautiful dream, we must learn God's way of making the dream come true.

> The kingdom that I seek is Thine,
> So let the way that leads to it be Thine.
> Else I must surely stray.

2. Agreed as we all are to-day that the hope of the world is bound up with the spread of true religion, it behoves us to know what true religion is and by what means it comes. A French writer has remarked that when Christ came into the world He asked nothing of it but a cross on which to die; on that Cross He did something for men which He could not do for Himself, and so made possible the achievement of His will for the unity of mankind. To us it stands mostly for the symbol of sacrifice. But that is not all; the Cross was first of all the outward and visible explanation of God's character. It told of Him as holy and righteous, hating iniquity and sin, and therefore of the need of reconciliation with Him. This fact is curiously and significantly unpopular to-day, and deep silence about it has fallen upon nearly all our lips. We glory in the greatness of man, in his capacity for endurance and suffering, in his excellent and admirable qualities, and overlook the fact of sin. And yet, as G. K. Chesterton observes, 'no one can walk down the street without seeing that man is a fallen creature.' And we cannot hope for the coming of a religion of brotherhood until men have first been reconciled to God through the word of the Cross.

In the Cross of Christ the brotherhood of man leapt over all national boundaries and claimed the whole world as its field. Calvary did but make visible what was always true, that God loved man, each man and every man, not for his merits, but because he was His, made in His image, made for His love. And when Christ died He died for all; at once there was created a new value for human souls. Every man, however degraded or ignorant, was now one 'for whom Christ died.' None could be despised or ill-treated or refused the fullest opportunity, seeing that God had set so high a price on him.

¶ A missionary taking part as a visitor in a service in a native church in India had the privilege of seeing a very impressive occurrence. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was being administered by a highly respected native pastor to a very large body of native Christians. As one looked at the congregation it was impossible to miss the fine upstanding figure of a high-caste Brahman who bore on face and form and carriage the stamp of many generations of authority and refinement. A handsome man, he looked, what indeed he was, every inch a gentleman. But sitting beside him, by a striking coincidence, was a low-caste Hindu bearing in his person signs, just as unmistakable, of his depraved origin. Features, form, clothing, bearing, all proclaimed the mental and spiritual poverty of his forbears and of his present social position. There carved in life before him the visitor could see the supreme social problem of India, and indeed of the world.

Presently the native pastor approached these two bearing the sacred elements, and, magnetized presumably by the manifest superiority of the Christian Brahman, he instinctively offered the bread and the wine first of all to him though in doing so he had to pass the low-caste worshipper. With a perfect dignity and graceful simplicity the Brahman immediately himself passed the elements to his low-caste neighbour, gently but firmly insisting upon his partaking of them first. And the missionary looking on saw the Brahman as he took the cup again from his lowly fellow-worshipper deliberately place his lips upon the very spot of the rim at which so lately his low-caste brother had drunk.[1]

[1] A. D. Belden, *When Power Comes*, 23.

But, for the realization of that sense of brotherhood, God needed the co-operation of man. Therefore the little Church set herself at once to take up her cross and spread its spirit everywhere. The task was not easy, for man was slow to understand and grasp the significance of so great a truth. The leaven spread slowly, many remained but babes in Christ. So it was their Master had told them it would be. And what is true of individuals is true likewise of nations. Not all at once do they spring into full comprehension of their heritage in Christ. But it is ours to bid them bring as they are able their distinctive gifts of citizenship, government, and intellect into the City of God; and as the spirit of Christ gains larger freedom in their experiences, so will they make fuller contribution to the wealth of the whole family of God.

The Cross, then, is the assurance that the Brotherhood of man is the eternal law of the universe. It offers us a safeguard against impatience; gives us an expression of religion that preserves it from individualism, seeing that He died for all; from worldliness, seeing that it proved the value of the eternal and unseen as against the standards of a passing age; from nationalism, seeing that it displays a catholicity that includes all nations in its embrace; and creates the power by which the thing can be done, the motive power of a love which over-rides all distinctions and binds all men by gold chains about the feet of God.

¶ Twenty-seven years ago Dr J. D. Jones was in America, and he says, referring to this visit: 'I noticed on the platform behind me two enormous flags, side by side—the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes. We had met for an international assembly. Right away at the top, over the two national flags, there was a tiny flag with a blue cross upon it. I had noticed that flag without realizing that any special significance attached to it. One day, however, one of our vice-presidents got up and called attention to those flags at the back of the platform, and he said: "Do you see that little flag at the top, that tiny little thing with a blue cross? It is the Divine Service Flag of the United States Navy. That flag was flying at the mast of the battleship *Iowa* when she sailed into battle against the Spaniards. It is the only flag that is ever allowed to float above the Stars and Stripes." It was flying there

above the Union Jack as well as the Stars and Stripes. To me it was just a parable. The flags of the nations will fly in friendship side by side when that little flag with the cross on it floats over them all. The cross will unite class and class, and people with people, and we shall have a world of peace and brotherhood and goodwill.'

Feeling After God

Acts xvii. 26, 27.—'And hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.'

THE statement which the Apostle makes in these far-reaching words is a very striking one. He tells us that God has appointed and determined the times at which the nations appear on the face of the earth, the duration of their existence and the precise bounds of their dominion. It was not by accident that the great empires of the Euphrates preceded all later civilization. The rise, glory and fall of Egypt were matters of Divine prescience and arrangement. Other nations have coloured the map of the world in the order and after the fashion which the Almighty pre-arranged, just as successive orders of annuals and flowering plants succeed each other in the gardens and on the wolds. Nothing left to haphazard, nothing trusted to chance, nothing the result of the wit or the vehemence of man. All these arrangements as to season and location were determined in order 'that men should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him.'

There follows the exquisite thought that God is brooding over the great races of men, that there never was a nation which was not dear to the Father's heart quite as much as the Jewish people. It was a wonderful thing for a Hebrew of the Hebrews to make that confession, for the Hebrews had been accustomed to consider that they only were the elect and chosen race. Yet St Paul, in that great sweep of inspiration and Christian statesmanship, was able to think of every nation and race as having been subjected to the same influence.

We see how great and comprehensive God's purpose was as conceived by the Apostle—that every race was located and circumstanced that it might best find Him.

1. *The Divine Method of Incentive.*—God has been moving over men and attracting them to Himself. He has not dared to reveal Himself, for then He would spoil the education of the human spirit. But, carefully veiling Himself in the darkness so that men could not see His form or hear His voice, all through the ages of human history God has been yearning that men should feel after Him if haply they might find Him. The idea is that of a mother calling in the dark to her child, in the hope that the little one will grope through the darkness with outspread hands feeling after other hands, until the parent's hand is touched. As the mother calls the child to her, so God calls men by successive voices.

(1) By His work of creation. For the invisible hands of God are all of them deeply wrought into the things which men behold; not a flower or leaf but bears some trace of His unrivalled finger, and all Creation is strewed with the wonders of His hands that mutely appeal to the soul of man to turn to Him that made them.

¶ In a letter to a friend Jowett says: 'I believe that everything in nature is a sort of language which God uses to speak to us. He is saying something to us in every sunset, and in every wild flower, in every calm or stormy sea. But we are so dense that we cannot interpret it, and it is so often as though our Lord were making no communication at all.' [1]

(2) By His daily mercies. They were referred to by Paul when he said to the Lystrians—the simple agricultural people of the uplands of Asia Minor—that God had given fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with joy and gladness that they might seek after Him. Those who have seen the happy people working on the great plains of India have been able to interpret the Vedic hymns the better as they have seen in those conditions the natural simplicities of human life in which men, receiving from the hand of the unseen God their daily bread, thank Him and rejoice before Him.

(3) By great prophets and teachers. We speak the names of Confucius and Buddha and Zoroaster with reverence. No doubt their character and their words have been greatly

[1] A. Porritt, *John Henry Jowett*, 237.

distorted by the succession of the centuries, but these men originally were lighted by the Light which lights every man that comes into the world, and they spoke brave and strong and holy words for God and truth in which are some jewels which afterwards appeared in the teaching of Christ; because all truth is one.

¶ Dr Marcus Dods finds a remarkable instance of ethical insight in the anticipation by Confucius of the golden rule of the gospel. 'One of his disciples, weary of maxims and rules, said to Confucius, "Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?" The Master replied, "Is not *Reciprocity* such a word?" What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.'[1]

(4) By the discipline of history. In Paul's original conception, history, the stress of war, the incidence of famine, or pestilence, the struggle for supremacy, the failure of a nation to realize its desires, its patience under crushing defeat, its extension, the diminution of its territory, its collision with adjacent tribes, the struggle for survival—all this was of God, all this was intended, all this was part of a Divine purpose, by the discipline of history, to drive men to seek Him. We know how the Hebrew people found God in every event in their history; but we believe that Assyria and Babylon, Nineveh and Rome, could have similar stories written of God's dealings with them.

2. *Limitations of Natural Religion.*—Paul says, 'If haply they might feel after Him and find Him.' The heathen has a very inadequate idea of God; he is not sure of Him. He goes forward, He is not there; and backward, but cannot find Him—not at all sure that God loves him and that God cares for him. He is full of doubt and fear; yet if the Pleiades speak of mercy, Orion talks of judgment; and if summer of goodwill, what of winter with its storms and frosts? He thinks he must propitiate God with offerings. He is always giving and always afraid that the demand is not satisfied. Shall they give their first-born for their transgression, and can they even then count on His forgiveness?

¶ Augustine says: 'I have looked through many of the heathen writers and have found many jewels in Cicero and in Herodotus.' Yet 'I never found anything like "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."'

And they are not sure about the future. In the pagan catacombs of Rome, as you wander through those subterranean passages you may often see the inscriptions over the ashes of the dead: '*Vale, vale, in eternum*'—an eternal farewell.

Then natural religion has no dynamic. The desire of man has often been pure and strong and regnant, but he has found himself sold and dragged back again to evil. Have you ever thought of the wonderful conceptions that have come down to us from the garden of heathen mythology? Think of Sisyphus always pushing the stone uphill, and the stone always rolling back again; or think of Tantalus seeking the water that flees from his lips—each of these a symbol of the unsatisfied heart of man longing for what it cannot get.

The Infinite Father, whose offspring men are, as the Apostle tells us, must have regarded all the efforts of men with infinite tenderness. His Spirit was even then striving with their false notions, and by His sure guidance He was leading the race slowly towards the fullness of the time when He should speak through His Son.

3. *The Power of the Living Christ.*—Heathenism has its ethic, but has failed to find its dynamic, and that is why Paul said, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the *power* of God unto salvation.' The power of the living Christ, the power by which frail man is energized by something not himself—there is the power of Christianity.

The Apostle came upon a familiar theme when he talked about that Man whom God has ordained. We might argue that He is what we hold Him to be—the God-man—because of the mystery of His birth or, as Paul argued, because of the wonder of His resurrection, but we have got another kind of evidence, that all through the centuries Jesus Christ has influenced and saved men and loosed them from their sin. The power of the living Christ is the greatest proof of all. Why was it that this Man exercised so great an authority? Was it merely because of the tremulous expectancy of the Oriental mind that longed for a deliverer, or was it because of the magic of His teaching, or was it the influence of His

[1] *Erasmus and other Essays*, 256.

person and character? All through His life He drew men to Him, and in His death even Pilate confessed that He was an extraordinary man; and the centurion that He was the Son of God. There is much in that! But it was not any of those things that made Jesus the Conqueror and King of men, but because He alone had dealt adequately with the sense of human guilt.

¶ One of the noblest of Indian converts—Nehemiah Goreh—when he was asked what he found in Christianity that he had not found in his own religion, was wont to say, 'I find in it, and in it alone, the power to save me from my sins.' [1]

¶ Those who remember their Agamemnon or their Œdipus and the choruses of the Greek plays know that the Greek mind—these Greeks to whom Paul spoke—was always oppressed with a consciousness of the enormity of guilt and those who remember *Macbeth* and *King Lear* and *Richard III.* know how Shakespeare is always touching those deep chords of the human soul which respond to the appeal, the chords that witness to sinfulness and guilt. Or you may remember how Dr Donne, Dean of St Paul's, one of our greatest preachers, always went through life sadly because before he became a clergyman he had written a book of lascivious poetry. Mankind has always felt like that, and the one thing that has made Jesus Christ the Man of men is that He has not only forgiven us, but He has loosed us from our sins.[2]

The Nearness of God

Acts xvii. 27.—'Though he be not far from every one of us.'

The largest and most fundamental thought about God, as concerns us, must be this, that He is near us—the truth which Paul told the Athenians, and which we more and more desire to tell to ourselves and to all the people who seem to be living so much of their lives as if God were not near them, but far away.

1. The difficulty of conceiving and remembering the nearness of God comes, in the first place, from the fact that our ideas of nearness are so material. We think of things which we can see, of things which touch us, as near; and so the nearness of God is apt to sink into vague and figurative meanings. It means to us that, sitting on His far-away throne, He feels affectionately for us His children in our distant world. But we must guard against such thoughts. A real propinquity, a nearness like that with which the air presses on the skin, a nearness which is omnipresence—this is the truth which underlies all the meanings of the Apostle.

The truth of omnipresence is not easy to lay hold of, except in the simplest way. We should think of God's nearness to us as something corresponding to the closeness with which the forms of those who touch us press upon us. Unseen, unfelt by any fleshly touch, He is yet as near to us as they are.

How near He is!—and yet
How often I go on with downcast eyes.
How often I forget
To see the light that all about me lies.

How near He is! Yet I
So often live this life of mine alone—
So often pass Him by,
And miss the joy He willeth for His own.[1]

2. But we cannot rest here. We must know something of how this God who is so near to us feels towards us. For it is possible to be so near, and yet so far away! It is so possible for our fellow-men to touch us and yet be separated from us by a wall of dislike or indifference! But the Bible revelation certainly is that God is not only near to us, but that He loves us. His Presence is a loving Presence. More than this: God loves us not by any deliberate choice of His will, as if He might have loved us or might have hated us, but He loves us because He is God. As fundamental, as eternal, as solid a part of Himself as His Being is His love. And so this love becomes a part of the meaning of His nearness to us.

¶ All God's attributes are inflections or phases of love. Love is not one of His attributes; it is all of them. His holiness is the wholeness of His love. His righteousness is the eternal conformity of His life to love. His justice is love looking out on the great mass of His creatures. His beneficence is love showing

[1] Bishop Welldon. [2] F. B. Meyer.

[1] Edith H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 27.

itself in deeds which we recognize as helpful. His pity is love toward the sorrowing. His mercy is love toward the sinful. But whether He be merciful or beneficent or just or righteous or holy, He is love.[1]

God, then, is not only near us: that is much. He is forever loving us and trying to help us, and this by the very necessity of His being God; that is much more. In it are involved all the relations of God to us, the sternest and most awful as well as the sweetest and tenderest. It brings our life and His close together, making them touch not merely in the softest but also in the hardest places. It sets us before our Master, our Lawgiver, and our Judge. It brings no licence for sin, but rather, as St Paul says, 'a fearful looking-for of judgment.' To know that God loves us, to know it so that it is ever present with us, is to have entered on the richest and happiest, but also on the most serious and solemn, of all human lives.

3. But God's nearness to our lives contains a still deeper relation—the power of personal communion and communication. This is always the profoundest sort of nearness; there can be nothing closer. You live by your friend's side, and that is help and comfort to him, the mere being his friend. Then you do something for him, and bless him still more by your active love. But the subtlest and richest relation of your life to his is not attained until, in what we call 'influence,' your very character and nature imparts itself to him; he grows to be what you are; he becomes you, and you him.

We want to know that this is true of God. Much, very much, is it to us that He is close to us, closer than the friend whose hand is clasped in ours, whose breath is on our cheek. More, far more, is it that He loves us, and that He is always watching and working for our good. But most and best of all is it that His nature and ours are so truly related, we are so really made in His image, that He may impart Himself to us and make us live, by His Divinity, a holy and Divine life which shall not merely be like His; it shall be His life become ours by the receptivity of faith.

¶ On one occasion a novice, entering Sister Theresa's cell, was struck by the heavenly expression of her countenance. She was sewing industriously, and yet seemed lost in deep contemplation. 'What are you thinking of?' the young Sister asked. 'I am meditating on the "Our Father,"' Thérèse answered. 'It is so sweet to call God "Our Father!"' . . . and tears glistened in her eyes. Another time she said, 'I cannot well see what more I shall have in Heaven than I have now; I shall see God, it is true, but, as to being with Him, I am that already even on earth.'[1]

To know of God's propinquity we need only open our eyes. To receive His love we must set free our gratitude. To take in His character we must unfold the very depths of our nature: we must cast out our most intimate and dearest sin; we must bring our will to its sublimest task; we must believe and trust.

Thou Life within my life, than self more near!
Thou veilèd Presence infinitely clear!
From all illusive shows of sense I flee,
To find my centre and my rest in Thee.

Take part with me against those doubts that rise
And seek to throne Thee far in distant skies!
Take part with me against this self that dares
Assume the burden of these sins and cares!

How can I call Thee who art always here,
How shall I praise Thee who art still most dear,
What may I give Thee save what Thou hast given,
And whom but Thee have I in earth or heaven?[2]

[1] Lyman Abbott.

[1] *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*, 194. [2] Eliza Scudder.

God, the Source of Life

Acts xvii. 27, 28.—'That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being.'

THE whole universe is a gradual unfolding of life. In all its range, from its lowest beginning up to its highest point, up to human life, it is an unfolding of life. And this life at every point comes forth from God; and so the whole universe, because it lives with a life from Him, is a gradual revelation of the being and the nature of God.

We learn about God in the physical world. The invisible things of Him, St Paul says, are clearly seen, being discerned by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.

Take, for instance, some example of power—it may be only a storm at sea, the violence of the wind. Let the imagination, then, go out and try to embrace what must be the enormous sum of forces which are working in this visible world. We cannot do it; but that very fact fills the mind with a vast sense of Infinite power which is but an effluence from the power of God, who abides and works in that universe which He has created.

But it is not mere power; it is power regulated so that it can work to the production of the minutest glories of some little flower. It is not only power, but power regulated by wisdom, ruled in the interests of a purpose, of a motive; ruled with the manipulation of beauty, of order, of method. It is not merely power, but power and Godhead. We recognize that all this vast display of infinite skill and wisdom, so all-embracing and so minute, is but the reflection of the infinite, perfect wisdom and beauty and glory of God. 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.'

Observe God in His works. Each tree, herb, flower,
Are shadows of His wisdom, and His power,—
Each bush and oak doth know—I Am. [1]

And yet it is very little that we have grasped when we have grasped this, because Nature is but a faint image of God compared with man. Man was made in God's image, and that means that human nature reflects far more adequately and more fully the being and the nature of God. God reveals Himself in the conscience of man as the Eternal Righteousness, and in the characters of men as the Eternal and all-indwelling Personality. Once again, then, we let our minds range over all the varieties of human character and disposition as God made them, and intended them to develop; we think of all the different characteristics of intellect, all the different sorts of inventive and discovering skill and ability which have facilitated human progress; we take in all the great variety of human excellence, character, capacity, and again we fall down in adoring reverence, as we think that all this vast display only reflects what eternally exists in the fullness of the Divine character and the Divine personality. And if we are in doubt as to what in human nature is what God intended, and what in it is due to sin and perversity, we look at the manhood of Jesus Christ. We hear His words, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the father'; we contemplate His life of perfect, self-sacrificing love; we know that God in the very central essence of His Being is nothing else than essential Love. Thus, in every stage, created life is an expression of God; it reveals a power and wisdom, an intelligence, a character, a personality, a love which lies beyond itself.

[1] Henry Vaughan.

God of the earth, the sky, the sea,
Of all above and all below,
Creation lives and moves in thee,
Thy present life through all doth flow.

Thy love is in the sunshine's glow,
Thy life is in the quickening air;
When lightnings flash and storm-winds blow,
There is thy power, thy law is there.

But higher far, and far more clear,
Thee in man's spirit we behold;
Thine image and thyself are there,—
The indwelling God, proclaimed of old.[1]

[1] Samuel Longfellow.

God is the Source, then, of all life; and, as the Source of it, He does not leave it to itself, He abides in it. God is the Creator and the indwelling Sustainer of all life; in Him we live, and move, and have our being. And yet God is not confined within this life which expresses Him; He is eternally complete in Himself. That means that He did not need this creation in order to express Himself. He made this lower world out of the pure love which animates His being, and of the simple desire that beings should exist to know the joy of existence, and have the delight of praising, and serving, and enjoying Him. His life, that is, does not depend upon the creature; He lives in Himself a life of perfect completeness, of perfect movement, of perfect fellowship.

In a sense God only began to create in time; but He was productive, energetic, living, long before He was a Creator. God is eternally alive, and life means fellowship. In God there was an eternal fellowship—a love which never failed of its object, a love of the Father and the Son in the embrace of the Holy Ghost. There

was a co-equal knowledge: 'No man knoweth the Father save the Son.' That fellowship of will, of knowledge, of love—that is the eternal Being of God.

On such considerations we may found two simple lessons.

1. If God is the source of life *we must learn to worship Him and to love Him as such.* This means that we are deliberately to learn to take such real pleasure in God that in all times of disappointment and failure we can find our peace, our satisfaction, our freedom in the profound and final consolation that God is.

What is worship? May we not express it simply as the seeing God and rejoicing in Him in all things; the seeing and adoring all things in God. Among the many modes in which God reveals Himself, think just of these three: truth, beauty, and goodness. The mode of truth, because wherever there is truth of any sort or kind, discovered by whatever method, this is something which reveals to us God. All truth has a substantial value, not merely so far as we can find it edifying, but because as being truth it is a reflection of Him who is the eternal and uncreated Truth. And so it is with beauty and goodness. The Christian has to learn, as he moves about the world, to see God in all the truth and the beauty and the goodness which he sees in the world of men and things about him. The Christian carries the temper of adoration out of the sanctuary into the world; he is always looking for beauty and truth and goodness, which still are revealed in the ordinary work-a-day world in which we move.

The heart of adoration is to adore God not for what He has given us, or for what we want of Him, but simply because of the supreme and uncreated glory of His eternal Being. 'We praise Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee,' for nothing less than 'Thy great glory.' Learn to worship. Let it diffuse itself over your whole life; let it pass out with you into the streets and into the intercourse of ordinary life, till you indeed learn somewhat of that temper which, seeing God in all things and all things in God, has passed already amid the changes and chances of this life into that central peace which passes understanding.

2. We learn, also, the very practical lesson that if we are to serve the living God *we must show a great deal of vitality in our own lives.* We serve a living God. 'I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly.' God estimates us not by the actual level of spiritual attainment we have reached, but simply by the amount of real moral movement there is in our lives; by how much, that is to say, we are really alive. Why did our Lord appreciate the publican so much more than the Pharisee? Not because the Pharisee had not got to a higher level of religious attainment, but because the Pharisee was content; he had ceased to grow, to move. Therefore he was offensive in the eyes of a living God, who looked at the publican by his side, and saw there vitality, life. God is a source of life, and if God is working in us we can trace His working by an increase of vitality. We must grow in spiritual wisdom and understanding, in the love of God, in the beauty of holiness.

¶ Miss Kingsley writes thus in praise of her garden: 'Unlike other works of art, there is no finality in a garden. The picture once painted, the statue once sculptured, it is finished. But the garden goes on growing as long as time and love of it shall last, each succeeding year adding some fresh touch to the beautiful conception, and this Garden of Delight never fails in fresh surprises.' [1]

It is to live then to serve God; to serve God is to move, it is to be moving in ourselves towards God. And it is to be moving out of ourselves in beneficent action upon men. Faith is an energetic instrument which does not merely repeat the words of a creed, but which takes them as life-giving motives for going out into the world. Faith removes mountains. There are immense mountains of social evil to be removed; great and yawning gulfs between class and class, between the privileges of one and the miseries of others. Here are great mountains, and we need to remind ourselves that God is the source of life, that His service is to live, to go out removing mountains. We have to go out in beneficent action, to make the meaning of our gospel, the meaning of our faith in a Redeemer who came that we might have life, felt and known in the removing of the great mountains which still rise ominous and strong and unshaken on their firm bases of sin and wrong. We must in our own relation to Him, and in our own relation to all the world, be more alive.

[1] *Eversley Gardens.*

Then and Now

Acts xvii. 30.—'The times of this ignorance God winked at.'

1. Much of man's sin consists in being behind the times. It is a most disturbing fact that God is not dead but alive. We love to settle down in customary ways; we put our minds to bed. But the forward moving purposes of the living God are for ever disturbing our repose and forcing us to move. Humanity settled down on a flat and stationary earth, with the vault of heaven a few miles above, and to that cosmology scaled all its thinking; but of a sudden the flat earth rounded out into a sphere and went spinning through space. God tipped the minds of all the world out of bed that day and cried 'Move on!'

What the living God does with our minds He does with our morals. Polygamy once was practised by the Hebrew patriarchs whose names still are precious in our memory. Paul's phrase about idolatry is true of polygamy as well: 'The times of this ignorance God winked at.' But neither God nor man winks at polygamy now. Slavery was taken for granted in the ancient world; without a word against it as an institution, the Bible in law, precept, and parable, assumes its presence. But the day came when God commanded all men everywhere to repent of it. Drunkenness once was taken for granted, and with no diminution of public standing or personal respect was practised by laymen and clergymen alike. But now neither God nor man allows it any more. A thousand things once thought to be right men now repent of in dust and ashes. What God once seemed to condone, we now know that He condemns.

In wide areas of its worst exhibition, therefore, sin means living in the present age upon the ideals and standards of an age gone by. 'It was said unto you of old time,' the Master repeatedly insists, 'but I say unto you.' The commandments which thus He supersedes are not precepts obviously bad; they are allowances of conduct that in the times of men's ignorance God winked at. One way to sin in His eyes is to live in His new day as though the old day still were here. Everywhere in the New Testament the characteristic sinners are men who thus refused to go forward with Jesus' living truth, who refused to move on with Paul's universal gospel. They were men of the closed mind and the backward look.

¶ How many folk there are who deserve Proudhon's comment on Metternich! 'If he had been present when God began to bring order out of chaos, Metternich would have prayed fervently, "O God, preserve chaos!"'

The living God continually forces new truths and new ideals upon His children. As General Booth remarked, 'You can keep company with God only by running at full speed.' Being up to date may often mean cheap compliance with a passing fad, or even refusal to obey truths that, being old, are ever new because they never fail. But the perversions of so important a matter as being abreast of the times ought never to cause a Christian to surrender the virtue of it. The New Testament throbs with new truths, new hopes, new enterprises, and it called men to its cause who had eyes to see and courage to follow unblazed trails. The true successors of the first apostles have been men of Livingstone's spirit: 'I will go anywhere provided it be forward.'

2. What the living God does with our minds and our morals He does with our methods of service. The spirit and motive of unselfish living abide, but the machinery of their expression changes. When selfishness fails to conquer a man's generous sentiments, it may still spoil his usefulness by a belated mind.

The urgency of this fact is evident as soon as one remembers the amazing new powers that modern science has given to men. The gambler, the murderer, the thief, and the Christian alike have new tools to work with, which make old methods as obsolete as winnowing by wind. Science has put into the hands of the race such power as the ancient world never dreamed of; what the race will do with it is the question on whose answer the hopes of human kind depend. The one solution of this crucial problem which can relieve the race from the certainty of ruin is that this new power should be used for man's service, not for man's destruction.

¶ Saloman Reinach, looking forward to the Peace Conference at Versailles, wrote: 'At the future Congress, among the seats reserved for

the delegates of the great Powers, one seat should remain vacant as reserved to the greatest, the most redoubtable, though youngest of Powers: science in scarlet robes. That is the new fact; that is what diplomacy should not ignore, if that imminent and execrable scandal is to be averted—the whole of civilization falling a victim to science, her dearest daughter, brought forth and nurtured by her, now ready to deal her the death-blow. The all-important question is the muzzling of the mad dog. Science, as subservient to the will to destroy, must be put in chains; science must be exclusively adapted to the works of peace.'

At first this task seems too immense to lay special responsibility upon the little powers of ordinary folk. But like all large tasks it is soon reduced to fractions, and every worker for the good of men can handle part of it. A serviceable man will indeed catch the vision of a new world in which the increasing powers conferred by science are set to useful, not destructive, tasks. But he will also catch the vision of his own life mastered by the same spirit. From teaching a Sunday school class to managing an industry, from tending children in the home to conducting a missionary enterprise, he will never do a good task in less than the best way.

One subtle temptation continually assails all Christian service. People suppose that the good will which prompts it and the good ends for which it works will somehow assure its victory. The children of light, as Jesus said, are tempted to be less wise in their generation than the children of darkness. Outworn methods that we would scorn in business we employ in church. We use the aptest tools, the latest knowledge, to make money; we give it away with spasmodic carelessness, as though it were not one of life's most difficult tasks to give money wisely to the help of need. We know efficiency is necessary in self-seeking; we often act as though service were so beautiful in spirit that efficiency could be dispensed with. No one of us can escape the application of this truth to his own service in any realm, however limited. To 'take' a Sunday school class is one thing, to teach it is another. To give money is one thing, to help people by giving it is another. To be a father or mother, entrusted with a child, is one thing, to be fit to be one is another. In particular, however, our truth is a challenge to all men and women to whom God has given special gifts of leadership. We owe much to that man, endowed with an alert and able mind, who uses his skill to guide bewildered folk, eager to serve but not knowing how, into wise uses of some new power.

If mankind's intelligence is once deliberately set to this task of using the powers of the new era for serviceable ends, the vistas are as bright with hope as otherwise they are dark with dread. The age of miracles has passed, but through the knowledge of law a greater age is here. Possibilities that to older generations seemed Utopian now are practicable hopes: humanity can be saved from illiteracy and poverty, war can be abolished, industry can be democratized, and physical and moral scourges that have afflicted the race through all its history can be eliminated.

¶ Dr R. H. Murray[1] tells how Sir Ronald Ross made his discovery in malarial medicine which has preserved the lives of millions. 'There is a romance in the way the essential discovery was at last made. Mosquito after mosquito had been examined that day with negative results, and about one o'clock Ross started the dissection of an anopheles mosquito. Nothing was found on examination, and only the stomach tissue remained to be looked through. The eyesight felt already strained, and it seemed hardly worth while to continue the search. Methodically, however, he persisted, and, to his delight, discovered the malaria parasite living and growing in the mosquito. If admirers of Jenner deemed May 14, 1796, a red-letter day in the annals of mankind, we, as admirers of Ross, deem August 20, 1885, another red-letter day. Ross records his awe:

'This day, relenting God
Hath placed within my hand
A wondrous thing; and God
Be praised. At His command

'Seeking His secret deeds
With tears and toiling breath,
I find thy cunning seeds,
O million-murdering Death!

'I know this little thing
A myriad men will save.
O death, where is thy sting?
Thy victory, O grave?'

[1] In *Science and Scientists in the Nineteenth Century*, 378.

3. How many who call themselves Christians live in this new day as though the old day still were here! They support their families, pay taxes, contribute to the local church, and on occasion give to the neediest cases in their town. That is the limit of their financial output. In this modern world they are anachronisms. At least a century has passed over their heads without their knowing it. For one of the miracles of our age is the power it puts into the hands of a man with a few shillings to join himself with other men who have a few shillings, and within a few hours to put the pooled resources of all at work anywhere on earth from the centre of China to the heart of the Congo. One marvel of this new era is the romance of stewardship.

Once in an isolated settlement of the old world of slow communications, a man could hear of cruel need in the antipodes and could go home with nothing but sympathy to offer. Let no man in this modern world express sympathy with any need anywhere on earth unless he means it! The acid test can straightway be applied. For we can do something no matter where the need may be. The agencies of human helpfulness now reach in an encompassing network over all the earth. The avenues are open down which our pennies, our pounds, or our millions can walk together in an accumulating multitude to the succour of all mankind. This is a privilege which no one knew before our modern age. It is one of the miracles of science, mastered by the spirit of service, that a man busy at his daily tasks at home can yet be preaching the gospel in Alaska, healing the sick in Korea, teaching in the schools of Persia, feeding the hungry in India, and building a new civilization at the head waters of the Nile.

What is true of opportunity for financial service is true of many new agencies for usefulness which the modern world has given us. Once nations, lacking all vital contacts with one another, could become international neither in their spirit nor in their political arrangements; now nations are woven together by countless vital relationships into each other's lives and these accumulating contacts offer the supreme opportunity of all history to bring in the day of international co-operation. On every side new powers and new possibilities are put into our hands. The best hopes of mankind cannot be realized save as these new powers are converted, baptized, Christianized, and harnessed for ministry to human weal.

New occasions teach new duties; Time makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth;
Lo, before us gleam her camp-fires! we ourselves must Pilgrims be,
Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly through the desperate winter sea,
Nor attempt the Future's portal with the Past's blood-rusted key.[1]

The Resurrection and the Second Coming

Acts xvii. 31.—'He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead' (R.V.).

No event in history is more many-sided than the Resurrection. The purposes which it was intended to serve are doubtless far more numerous than we can know. One of those which Scripture actually discloses to us is found in our text.

Bishop Butler, in his famous *Analogy*, tells us that the first object of the religion of the Bible is to reaffirm and establish those primary principles of righteousness made known to us in conscience and the general experience of life. And when we turn from the acute reasoning of the bishop to the simple records of the first preaching of the gospel, we find this statement wonderfully confirmed.

One element in the primitive preaching is constant: 'With great power gave the apostles their witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.' This basis of solid concrete fact is unalterable. Other foundation can no man lay. This stone is the head of the corner. 'We did eat and drink with him after his resurrection.' Such a report as this, grossly material though it may seem, leaves no doubt that to the apostles themselves it was the fact in its most literal acceptation which constituted the pivot

[1] Lowell.

of their message. Without it there was no forgiveness of sins, no assurance of immortality, no pledge that Jesus was the Son of God.

But there are many to whom eternal life and the forgiveness of sins make no appeal. 'The higher man to-day,' so writes a popular man of science, 'is not worrying about his sins at all, still less about their punishment. His mission, if he is good for anything, is to be up and doing.' Those words are characteristic of the times. We are like men standing each by his own wheel, surrounded by machinery that is never silent, lives that are never quiet, brains that are never still.

¶ Mark Twain said once, 'If I were a heathen, I would rear a statue to Energy, and fall down and worship it.' That is entirely characteristic of the modern age. Think of the words which our generation's attitudes naturally suggest. They are all words of action. Aggressive, progressive, dynamic, vigorous—such words are applicable to our time. But who, describing our modernity, would ever think of words like these: poise, balance, peace, steadfastness, stability? [1]

We need a Paul to come and reason with us of righteousness, continence, and coming judgment—the eternal verities which alone can keep a man from losing himself in the vastness of the universe and invest his life with sublime meaning. What we notice in life as it manifests itself around us to-day is that the note of distinction, of high endeavour, of devotion to great causes is strangely absent. The oppressive weight of material things—the very knowledge of age-long processes which seem to put the goal of existence, if indeed such goal there be, very far off—has robbed men of the belief that their lives matter in the mighty sum of things. There is so much to be said on every side of every question that it is perhaps well not to look ten years ahead, nor go beyond what seems best, or at least attainable, in the particular conjunction of circumstances which has immediately presented itself.

That is the sort of existence passed by thousands of men and women in England to-day, whose parents had a puritan conscience and a quick sense of social duty. Two quotations will illustrate this. It is written on Livingstone's grave at Westminster, 'May Heaven's richest blessing come down on every one—American, English or Turk—who will help to heal this open sore of the world.' The other tells us what are the real voices to which the classes are now prepared to listen. 'The true leaders of the middle class,' says a shrewd observer of modern tendencies, 'are the financiers, who show them how to get more than three per cent. on their investments, and as long as any man, English or German, Aryan or Semitic, will show them this, and throw an occasional cheque to a church or chapel, he may do what he pleases.'

God 'hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained.' Is that really true? Can it indeed be that in the vast procession of existence, which moves across the little field of light out of the darkness whence it came into the darkness whither it goes, the fleeting actions of a detail so minute as a man have an absolute and eternal value, which will survive the fall and rise of empires, the birth and destruction of worlds? Do not let us spend ourselves in denunciations, often cruelly unjust, of what we call the race for wealth. Let us rather call it the struggle for bread. It is just here that the pathos of the situation lies. Despairing of certainty with regard to the great realities, yet inwardly responding to the things which are above, we seek to atone by diligence in business for neglect to serve the Lord, and replace the glad tidings of Christ's Finished Work by the gospel of 'effort which sustains and saves.'

'We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge.' A man whose lips can frame this dread confession of his faith is at once ennobled beyond all others who play for lesser stakes than the salvation of an immortal soul. And it was this dignity that came back into the lives of men when Christ was preached in their midst.

¶ One who has since passed within the veil often said to me, 'I thank God that there is a judgment to come.' At the time I could hardly say Amen! Judgment scarcely seemed to me a theme for a doxology; yet he was right—it *is* a thing to thank God for! It nerves all virtuous endeavour, it is the pulse of patience, the soul of perseverance—this appeal to a higher tribunal. And from the earliest ages the Church of Christ has felt that

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *Twelve Tests of Character*, 19.

she could not only solemnly say, but reverently and gratefully sing it too—

We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge,
We therefore pray Thee help Thy servants
Whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy Precious blood! [1]

How the whole face of life is changed, its proportions, its relative values, when once a man dares to believe that the destiny which awaits him is to see God! He touches all things with a strong, firm grasp. He knows in whom he has believed, even Him in whom is no variableness neither shadow cast by turning. This is where the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is decisive. It means that the vague longings for righteousness, the dim consciousness that there is an absolute standard of good, the intimations of a Law to which men owe an unfaltering obedience, of a Love that seeks a willing response, are not illusions of the mind.

We are sometimes told that it is presumption to suppose that one teaching, one life, one manhood appearing once in the course of the rolling ages should be invested with supreme authority to judge all things in earth and heaven. This might indeed be so if He who wrought 'in loveliness of perfect deeds more strong than all poetic thought,' still slept His sleep amid the flowers in Joseph's garden. But Jesus Christ is risen, and we Christian men are bidden by that mighty fact to seek those things that are above—Christ's righteousness, Christ's light, Christ's love—where for ever Christ lives at the right hand of God.

Three Attitudes Towards Truth

Acts xvii. 32-34.—'And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.'

It is in one or other of those three ways that any truth which challenges us is received: we mock at it, or we postpone any further thought about it, or, in the depths of our souls, we acknowledge it. This is what happened long ago in Athens, when Paul, in his address, touched upon the fact of the Resurrection, and touched upon it in relation to what the Greeks of that day and the Greeks of all time really resent, namely, the suggestion of a moral reckoning at the end of this world. But it is not only to a new and tremendous idea like that that we take up the attitude of laughter or delay or acceptance. Every word of God which proposes to make a change in our ways of thinking and of living is bound to have one or other of those three receptions.

Before considering those three attitudes let us look for a moment at an earlier matter, and one which is apt to be neglected. It is an almost universal error to suppose that a man has it altogether in his power at the moment to decide whether he shall be a religious man or not. There must, of course, be a great deal in his power, otherwise he could not be held accountable for his neglect of it. But it would be safe to say that at this present moment men have much less control over their religious behaviour than they themselves suppose. Our sympathies and our antipathies in matters of faith have their roots and causes far back in a region beyond the control of our immediate inclination. They spring from the general soil of our life. And how is the soil of our life formed? How is that moral background which to-day we call the subconscious self out of which all the great things of character emerge formed? It is formed from the sum of all our actions, from the sum of all our secret choices and decisions and experiences which, like fallen leaves, have settled down and have become in turn the moral background and source of what we are. This point of view has its own difficulties. It might have the effect of disheartening serious people to tell them that they do not have it entirely in their own power to make themselves religious or Christian. But that danger is less serious than the false idea which is so much in vogue, that the faith, the religion, communion with God, the experience of forgiveness and of power—that all these things may be secured by a casual nod of the head, by a wave of the hand signifying that now we are quite ready to attend to them. The mischief has all arisen from supposing that Christianity was a thing of mere opinion. There would never have been such a mistake had it

[1] J. M. Gibbon.

always been clear to men that Christianity is a life of holy love resting upon and refreshing itself in a great gratitude to Jesus Christ for something personally received.

The attitude, then, which we severally take up towards any higher truth is simply the instinctive reaction of our moral habit or established way of living. In other words, our attitude towards any higher truth is a revelation of our own personality. In a sense, therefore, it is perfectly true that a man may become a Christian any moment he likes, but he must see that he likes to. Our likes betray us, and show our level. Our like is the inclination of our total personality towards something which is proposed. There are three fundamental attitudes which the soul of us may take up, and one or other of them it must take up in the presence of religious truth. They are all three represented in those Athenians. The Apostle's preaching did not make them different men. His preaching only brought out to the light what different men they had been all the time.

1. *The Attitude of the Mocker.*—'Some mocked.' No doubt those who mocked imagined that they need not have mocked, that if they had cared they also could have believed. But it was not so. Being the men they were when the great truth about Christ was known to them they could do nothing but mock. They had trained themselves by many an unrecorded decision of the mind to mock at things which were beyond their moral or intellectual reach, at things which did not fit in with their accepted scheme of life. Open mockery of the Christian religion is not an uncommon thing amongst us. Wherever it exists it is the result of a habit which has been allowed to grow without rebuke. Anyone to-day who mocks at religion mocks at a great many other kinds of things. For religion is the sanction and support of all higher loyalties of life. A man who mocks at religion mocks at marriage. He mocks at human honour, he mocks at chastity, he mocks at all ideal ways of apprehending life. He will scoff, perhaps, at the democracy. He will call things unclean which God has made clean; and in saying those things he may give himself airs as though he occupied a place over the heads of common and faithful people, or as though he were aware of things which justified his cynicism, whereas the fact is he is only exposing and indulging his own disorderly and bankrupt moral nature. Tennyson once said that he would have liked to add an eighth to the seven wise sayings of the world: 'A man imputes himself.' There are men who to-day find life a rotten thing because they are making it a rotten thing. We each of us carry about our universe with us.

Well, with regard to those men who mock at religion and at other things, really there is nothing meanwhile to be done. They must be left to their own world until it breaks down over them and overwhelms them in some personal ruin. There is no test of our principles of life like the test of time. The mocking man will be getting older and there is always the possibility that the real thing may dawn upon him. A great, pure human love may dawn upon him, and that, as the Book of Proverbs puts it, may strike a dart through his liver, and he may say, like Saul, 'I have played the fool exceedingly.' We are all in good hands, and the mocker is not done with God yet. There are narrow doors through which we all have to pass, and strange human experiences which may be trusted to purge every soul of every affectation and bring every man, though it be only for a moment, face to face with truth and God.

¶ At the close of *The Ring and the Book* the old Pope is thinking about that consummate scoundrel Guido and wondering what is going to happen to him, wondering what becomes of those souls even in the other world or before they leave this one—those mocking, haunting, and cynical souls which a high civilization produces. The old man does not know very well, but he says, 'I remember once upon a time I was in Naples. It was a night of terrible darkness. There was no sea, no town, no church, no anything—when suddenly there was a lightning flash, and there stood the cathedral, and there, white like a shroud, the sea; and then it all passed and the darkness fell.'

So may the truth be flashed out by one blow,
And Guido see, one instant, and be saved.
Else I avert my face, nor follow him
Into that sad obscure sequestered state
Where God unmakes but to remake the soul
He else made first in vain; which must not be.

2. *The Attitude of Indecision.*—'We will hear thee again of this matter.' With regard to

this second class we cannot of course see to what length they were sincere in saying this or whether they were sincere at all. We know in the New Testament there is not much credit given to the people who said they would think about things later on. But supposing these people were sincere. In that case they would represent what is a most common attitude towards supernatural truth in our own day. Most people are well aware of changes which Christ would introduce in their whole scheme and outlook, and they even sincerely intend one day to have these things attended to. But at the present moment they are not quite ready for the changes, and in any case a later day will perhaps serve quite as well. Now, there would not be a great deal to say against that attitude if, in the first place, we were all quite sure that we had lots of time; but we can never be sure of that, and certainly our Lord while He was here was most reticent concerning what opportunities for amendment, if any, might await us in the other world. He did urge us all to believe that the choices which we make in this world are of quite incalculable seriousness.

¶ A great naturalist was once let down a cliff to get some birds' eggs which he supposed were on an edge half-way down from the top of the cliff to the sea. His men paid out the rope which let the naturalist down, and at a signal they ceased lowering him. The naturalist then busied himself in his quest, and when he had secured what he wished to secure he made the prearranged signal for them at the top to raise him. They found to their horror they could not raise him—and why? They had omitted to take into their calculations the weight of the rope they had paid out. They could lift up the man, but the man with all the rope they could not raise.

Every time that we neglect or suppress the inspiration that rises within us towards a higher life we there and then have tampered with the works of our souls and have interfered with God's whole business. And we all know that if we train ourselves to disregard these private instigations that come, we harden ourselves in that attitude, and they cease to repeat themselves.

3. *The Attitude of Belief.*—'Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed.' Why these believed, of course, we cannot say. We cannot say just what it was that happened. Our Lord said in His conversation with Nicodemus, speaking about this very matter, that the wind blows where it wants, and you cannot say where it comes from or where it goes to. So with everyone who is born of God. It just happens. But it never happens, of course, without an interaction of things within our own souls. And so we can imagine how it happened. We can imagine that as Paul was speaking, these people felt certain things happen within themselves—because truth never comes as a stranger to us. In fact, great preaching is not the saying of new things to people. Great preaching is telling to people what they know very well already. We all of us have enough religious knowledge to take us to the foot of the great White Throne. But it is dead knowledge. It is not alive; it is not effective in us; it is not compelling us.

¶ 'A friend of mine,' says Dr Hutton, 'was travelling on a railway in the North of England, and the train stopped. He asked the driver what was the matter. He said, 'Are you wanting water?' The driver replied, 'We have lots of water, but it is not boiling, and we have to wait till it boils.'

God has not left Himself without a witness in any life. There is no life which has not been visited by blessed instigations of that kind. There is no life so forlorn that does not have its moment when the man wanted to be a good man, and our Lord's pleading demand to us all is that we be loyal to those moments that come. 'Behold I stand at the door and knock,' and every high instigation is a knock of the hand of God. 'While ye have light, believe in the light.' That is a great thing—believe in the light. It is easy, especially for the young, to believe in darkness. It is easy to believe that the world is a bad place. It is easy to believe that there is nothing but natural law—the survival of the fittest, and all that kind of thing, that Christ came into the world to denounce. But our signal is to believe in the light against the darkness. Moments of that kind come. It may be that soon they are eclipsed. Yet our blood always goes a little faster and our whole life is lifted somewhat by the access of these flashing moments. Another saying of Jesus is, 'While ye have light, walk in the light'—act upon it. The

whole business of Christianity is that we proceed upon it.

¶ There is an old Chinese poet, who lived many centuries before our Lord, who gives this as his counsel to a lost, puzzled, straying world: 'Revere the heavenly moods, ephemeral though they seem.' That is a lesson that the Scriptures also keep reiterating. We must believe in our own highest moments, and discredit flatly the insistent evidence of the mean periods between.[1]

¶ You may remember that great chapter in St Augustine's Confessions where he, with the finger of genius, touches those causes that hinder men from launching out on the tide of God's spirit when it comes. You recall how Augustine would go out into his garden and pray with a candour which we have not the courage to copy, 'Lord save me from all my sins, but not quite yet,' and, of course, God did not answer that prayer. Then again, urged by the same invincible call to God, he would go out in the garden and he would pray, 'Lord save me from all my sins, except one,' and no answer came, for really no prayer had been offered. It is not a prayer which proposes to make a convenience of God. Until at last he went out into the garden, no longer able to endure the torture of a distracted personality, and prayed, 'Lord save me from all my sins, and save me now'—and the heavens opened and the angels of God ascended and descended upon him.

Tentmakers

Acts xviii. 3.—'And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.'

'An house not made with hands.' Surely not by accident does Paul come to frame this beautiful and haunting phrase. The link of association is very obvious and very pathetic. For this man was by craft a tentmaker. In many a mean dwelling, as this man's, whose hands ministered to his own necessities wrought by the dim light, there came swimming to his vision the great inciting prospect of 'An house not made with hands,' a building of God, eternal in the heavens, and his humble toil assumed a new significance as he lifted weary eyes to the palace of his dreams. For he had been in spirit also a tentmaker. He built him a tabernacle of the soul, austere and noble, 'As touching the law a Pharisee.' Now, though Pharisaism as a temper became a detestable thing, as a rule of life it had its own stateliness and inspiration, and for a time it sheltered him. But one day on the road to Damascus this tabernacle shrivelled to ashes at the touch of a fierce light above the brightness of the sun. The glory of the Son of Man made Paul homeless. For Paul the Christian is still a tentmaker; he has no continuing city. The very nature of his faith and mission seems to place a seal of instability upon his outward life. But why this restlessness, this fiery energy of purpose, if he looks not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen? Why not settle into Oriental calm and let the world go thundering by? Why not? Because as a Christian he must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. Because he knows that every holy passion of the Christian life, every thought and service given to the Lord of Life, are like invisible fingers weaving the fabric of a tabernacle which shall not perish. We are all tentmakers. We work with materials that are perishable. Our homes, our churches, our purposes, our civilizations, have in them much that is transient and provisional. Yet there is a Divine side to all this. There is something that survives. In so far as every tentmaker lies under the spell of Christ and truth and the unseen, his labour will not be in vain in the Lord. Let us apply the promise in one or two relations.

1. *The Human Home.*—Some can remember homes which are now 'broken up,' a cruel phrase which no familiarity of use ever seems to soften. They can recall the happy days of festival and reunion, when they gathered to the old rooftree. But now some members are gone to the land that is very far off. Some are in homes of their own. Some have done well, some have done ill. Some have seen the heavenly vision and loved it. Some have seen it and been disobedient to it. Is there any human institution which gives one the same impression of diversity and change as the human home? The very sacredness of its bonds seems but to remind us how frail a tent it is—sheltering a few kinsfolk for a little, then

[1] A. J. Gossip, *The Galilean Accent*, 35.

moving off down the long dim shadows towards the sunset. But there is a Divine side to this. The Christian home may seem to be haunted by change more than any other earthly institution, yet is there in it something indissoluble. It is more than a prophecy of the building of God. Its faith and love make an abiding sanctuary. And those who once sheltered beneath its roof, even to the end, may cherish the hope that its last scattered members and its worst may come home to the 'House not made with hands.'

2. *The House of Prayer.*—The same truth holds in relation to our house of prayer. What are our churches but wood and stone, the human side of a Divine fact, the tabernacles of a generation? Associations may hallow them. Age may lend them dignity. You may literally come to feel that one such spot on earth is for you a very sanctuary. But are they more than tents in the desert at the best? Yes, surely they are something more. Within such sanctuaries there are more of our company than we can see. 'Ye are the temple of God.' There is a church within the Church. There is a spiritual building which does not perish, but grows with the passing of the years. The public testimony of saintly lives, no less than the silent energies of their piety and intercession, has entered into the eternal sum of things in God's great Kingdom. They were rearing a mightier fabric than they knew. And so are we. If we cherish our sanctuaries because we love the Church which Christ purchased with His own blood, then the 'Mount that may be touched' is never far off from the heavenly Jerusalem. The true servants of the Church of Christ are even now building an house not made with hands.

¶ *Bishop.* They say it's an enormous concern!

Manson. So it is.

Bishop. Well, what would such an establishment as that represent? In round numbers, now?

Manson (*calmly*). Numberless millions.

Bishop. Numberless mil . . .! (*He drops his fork.*) My dear sir, absurd! . . . Why, the place must be a palace—fit for a king!

Manson. It is! . . . You must understand, this is no dead pile of stones and unmeaning timber. *It is a living thing.* . . . When you enter it you hear a sound—a sound as of some mighty poem chanted. Listen long enough, and you will learn that it is made up of the beating of human hearts, of the nameless music of men's souls—that is, if you have ears. If you have eyes, you will presently see the church itself—a looming mystery of many shapes and shadows, leaping sheer from floor to dome. The work of no ordinary builder!

The pillars of it go up like the brawny trunks of heroes: the sweet human flesh of men and women is moulded about its bulwarks, strong, impregnable: the faces of little children laugh out from every corner-stone: the terrible spans and arches of it are the joined hands of comrades; and up in the heights and spaces there are inscribed the numberless musings of all the dreamers of the world. It is yet building—building and built upon. Sometimes the work goes forward in deep darkness: sometimes in blinding light: now beneath the burden of unutterable anguish: now to the tune of a great laughter and heroic shoutings like the cry of thunder. [*Softer.*] Sometimes, in the silence of the night-time, one may hear the tiny hammerings of the comrades at work up in the dome—the comrades that have climbed ahead.[1]

3. *The Work of Life.*—The work of life falls within the scope of the same principle. It may require heroism to say 'Blessed be drudgery': it only takes common sense to say 'Blessed be work.' Yet are we more than tentmakers even in our greatest tasks? Man goeth forth to his labour until the evening. And something more than the instinct of self-preservation impels the finer spirit of our race. Some soul of industry or high ambition, some sense of partnership in a great task, inhabits some men's labour, redeeming it from sordid ends. But even so, is it not a tent that must be taken down? Our labours seem haunted by futility. Another generation comes hot on our heels, vigorous, enterprising, perhaps a little arrogant. Will our work, our methods, our ways of doing things, long survive the new era? Will not a younger age reflect with scorn upon our poor materials and our mean conceptions? It is hard to be superseded; but is it not the fate of all our labour? Is not the world's work also a journey in the desert, the sand covering its track almost in the passing?

[1] C. R. Kennedy, *The Servant in the House.*

No! that is not the full account. Of all the arts, music is the most spiritual; it also seems the most evanescent. What becomes of the Divinest strains, when they have touched our soul for an instant and then float out into the ether? Gone for ever? Browning says 'No.' This is the genius of the musician, that out of three sounds he frames not a fourth sound, but a star. With the coming of harmony you are in an abiding world, you deal with quantities and qualities that are elemental, enduring, divine.

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.[1]

That is gloriously true of the most elusive of all human creations. It is none the less true of every humblest task that has its soul of honest purpose. The outward form may pass. Many a man is fated before he dies to see the fruit of all his labour seemingly pass away. But no honest work dies.

¶ 'Remember,' says Charles Kingsley, 'if you lose heart about your work, that none of it is ever lost. The good of every deed remains, and breeds, and works for ever; all that fails or seems lost is the outside shell of things, which might perhaps have been better done, but, better or worse, has nothing to do with the real spiritual good which you have done to men's hearts.'

4. The solemn pageant of existence also comes within the range of this great law. God Himself has been a tentmaker. The pity of it is that so many dream or fear that He is nothing more; and in that case we should be such stuff as dreams are made of. When earth itself with all its tragic splendid history has, like a tabernacle, been folded up, there were then beyond but darkness and nothingness.

Strange the world around me lies,
Never yet familiar grown,
Still disturbs me with surprise,
Haunts me, like a face unknown.

In this house with starry dome,
Floor'd with gemlike plains and seas,
Shall I never feel at home,
Never wholly be at ease?

On from room to room I stray,
Yet my Host can ne'er espy,
And I know not to this day
Whether guest or captive I.

If that be the last word, we are, of all men, most miserable. But it is not the last word. Round this world, through its long record, sad and glorious, there has grown a greater and more enduring fabric—'an house not made with hands.' Within the bounds of mortality, the life everlasting has appeared in Jesus Christ. We are sure, through Him, that we are neither guests of a night nor captives of a cruel will, but children in the Father's House. There is a Home of the soul. There is a sanctuary within the 'insubstantial pageant' of our troubled life. There is a deathless Hope. Jesus said, 'I go to prepare a place for you.' 'Now abideth faith, hope, love; and the greatest of these is love.' 'Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

[1] Browning, *Abt Vogler*.

Two Moods of the Apostle

Acts xviii. 4, 5.—'And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.'

1. We shall very much mistake both the nature of inspiration and the character of the Apostle Paul if we do not recognize that he was a man of many moods, and tremulously susceptible to friendship and external influences. In the first

of these two verses we detect the note of strain and difficulty; in the other there is the sense of ease and fullness. In the earlier verse we read that he reasoned and tried to persuade, the very words giving us the impression of toil. In the later verse we read that he became absorbed in the Word, and testified or bore witness to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ, the very words giving us a happy impression of victory. In the one case we have a good man doing the best he can in the circumstances, his mood at the moment being what it is. In the other we have a good man become blessedly aware of some great Ally and resource.

Perhaps if we were more persistently faithful to God, we should all be less liable than we are to these sudden alternations of mood. Doubtless not one of us ought to be so much at the disposal of circumstances as we are. But, accepting ourselves as we must, we confess that we are susceptible to these sudden alternations of mood and feeling when our spirit in one moment can fall, as it were, through illimitable space, or from the loneliest depths may rise. Often it is a very small thing that has this masterful effect upon our minds. 'In the world of the soul,' says Faber, 'there are often shadows when there are no clouds.' Still, if it is true that a small thing may plunge a sensitive soul into darkness, it is equally true, and it is only just to God to recall this, that a small thing may likewise let loose within the soul the most amazing mood of joy.

¶ I suppose some brethren have neither much elevation nor much depression. I could almost wish to share their peaceful life, for I am much tossed up and down, and although my joy is greater than that of most men, my depression of spirit is such as few can have any idea of. This week has been in some respects the crowning week of my life, but it closed with a horror of great darkness, of which I will say no more than this—I bless God that at my worst, underneath me I found the everlasting arms.[1]

We know that at the time referred to in the text St Paul was passing through probably some of the darkest days of his life. He tells us that during his stay in Corinth, and especially in the early days of his stay, he was ill. In Corinth then, for many reasons, things were at their worst for him. He preached, he says, 'in bodily weakness and fear and much trembling.' 'Without were fightings, within were fears'; 'the care of all the churches was upon him.' And there, too, that mysterious malady swooped down upon him, whether of the body or of the soul, who knows? And then all this took place, at least so it seems, at a time when Paul himself was predisposed to take a despondent view of things. It would be foolish to say that Paul's mission to Athens, which immediately preceded, had failed; but a close reading of the Apostle's own narrative warrants us in saying that in his own view he had not succeeded. The politer people said they would hear him again, and we know what that means. And then he came to Corinth, that great centre of the mercantile life of the Mediterranean world with all its mixture of races, and all their ways of thinking, which was not often very deep. Live to-day, said the Epicurean, and they lived when they were in Corinth. The licentiousness and idolatry that surrounded him weighed upon him, and there is no wonder that his spirit went down. We can hear of complaints, too, made as to his preaching, as to his personal appearance even, and as to the way in which he developed and enforced his ideas. Well, this is one of God's ways of teaching us the Higher Knowledge of Himself. It is only a man whom God deals with in this utter way who later on can exclaim: O the depth of the riches of Christ; the depth of them!

2. In these circumstances Paul did his best. It is all to the honour of the Apostle that, passing through the things which he was passing through, he nevertheless went on reasoning and trying to persuade. He did not resign. Not only was it a great thing, but it was the wisest thing also. It is a temptation which besets us all when the wind for some reason or other falls away and our boat lies impotent upon the water, it is a temptation for us, sometimes even in the name of piety, to sit there waiting till a wind springs up again. But this is not a course which is an honour to God; for it is not honouring to other sides of our nature, other faculties with which our religion has likewise to deal. At such times we need not be idle. There are oars. Many a time in the voyage of our spirits we lie becalmed longer than there is need, because, had we in the day of our impotence bestirred ourselves, we should have found ourselves next moment in the way of another wind.

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

¶ Stopford Brooke, speaking of Frederick Robertson's natural morbidness, says: 'He could never have been entirely free from it unless he had been a soldier in constant warfare. But here, where his greatest weakness lay, appeared his greatest strength. He transmuted the dross of his nature into gold by the alchemy of Christian effort.'

It is as we are faithful to what we know, and are using such powers as we have in the obedience of God, that greater powers are given us. There is a co-operation necessary on the part of a man—and this also is not without the aid of God's Spirit—which nevertheless may be a condition of the Spirit's more effective possession of us. It is to souls which are faithful to God and which do reverence to their own experience in the dark and difficult places that the Holy Spirit even in this world comes, and greets them now with the approval which is promised to the faithful at the end, 'Enter into the joy of thy Lord.'

Paul reasoned and tried to persuade them. The words give us a sense of heaviness and difficulty and dryness of spirits, as of a man crossing a moor with the wind in his teeth. In the next verse we read that this same man, being constrained by the Word, bare witness that Jesus is the Christ, the very words giving us the sense of victory. To witness is to speak out of the joy and certainty of experience. It is to be fresh, to be contemporary. It is to have our soul poised and on the strain, aware of some danger all the time, and all the time confident that the danger need never engulf us.

3. We ask, What was it under God that brought about the blessed change? We read that it was when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia that the cloud lifted, and we need hardly ask why. The grasp of a friend's hand did it; the support of men who believed in him when he scarcely believed in himself. They were to him as brothers in the place of God. In the case of a sensitive soul like his it would be enough to see these men who had been with him at other times for his heart with a great rebound to recover its joy. But when they went away with Paul in private and gave him their news, then his cup was full to overflowing. For what was it that Silas and Timothy told Paul? In the First Epistle to the Thessalonians we have the story told by Paul himself: 'When Timothy came even now unto us from you and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have remembrance of us, always longing to see us even as we long to see you, for this cause we were comforted over you in all our distress and afflicted through your faith. For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.' That was the news that Silas and Timothy brought to Paul. Truly, 'how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!'

This is one of the functions of the Church of Christ—just to be a *society of friends*. The Church is that community which by all its words and ordinances and by its atmosphere mediates to the hard-pressed soul of man the comfort of an understanding God. And this comfort the true Church will always mediate, not simply by her assertion that such comfort dwells in God, but by manifesting, incarnating that comfort in the actual friendliness of her members. This contact with these old friends and this hearing of their good news would affect the whole bearing of the Apostle. *It would help him to believe in himself again.* It would take away his sense of loneliness—that he was one man fighting against the world. It would also deliver him from those misgivings as to his fitness for his high calling, or misgivings as to whether the power of God has its way with men as it once had.

Newman once said that few of us can do without a little success; and the truth of that saying lies just there. A man is lost when he has lost heart. By some means a man must be saved from the idea that he and what he is doing are of no consequence, and he must be brought to see that God is One who cares for him, that all service ranks the same with Him, that with Him there is neither first nor last. And that is what these two friends did for Paul.

Most sorrows are forms of loneliness; and Silas and Timothy by their presence assured Paul that he was not alone so far as they were concerned, and by what they told him about his work they assured him that he was not alone so far as God was concerned. And what we need to-day, who have our hours and days of misgiving and despondency, is to lift up our eyes and behold the things which are there to quicken the pulse of every true man of God.

¶ James Gilmour of Mongolia, in one of his self-revealing letters, says: 'To-day I felt a good deal like Elijah in the wilderness. I wonder if I am telling the truth when I say that I felt drawn towards suicide. I take this opportunity of declaring strongly that on all occasions two missionaries should go together. I was not of this opinion a few weeks ago, but I had no idea how weak an individual I am.'

In another place he says: 'The feeling of being *alone* comes over me till I think of Christ and His blessed promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." No one who does not go away, leaving all and going alone, can feel the force of this promise; and when I begin to feel my heart threatening to go down, I betake myself to this companionship.'

When the New Testament closes there is the sense of a great struggle about to enter upon a fiercer and more intimate stage. St John, the aged, desires to deliver a message of comfort to the hard-buffeted servants of Christ, desires to lift up their hearts from the apparent failure and discomfiture—and how? He tells them that never for one moment should they believe that what they see with the natural eye is all that is. 'After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven.' And then the holy man discloses what he sees. And they all gathered round the Throne, and on the Throne there was a Lamb as It had been slain! Ours, indeed, is not a conflict against flesh and blood; but there is more than flesh and blood upon our side.

That is the last message of the Spirit to the Church on earth. We are not alone. The things which are seen are temporal and the things which are not seen are Eternal.

Gallio

Acts xviii. 12-17.—'And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drave them from the judgment seat. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.'

Corinth was a Roman colony, and when the Apostle Paul had been labouring there for about a year Gallio took up his duties as proconsul of Achaia. He was an attractive figure, one of those great Romans of whom we meet so many in the New Testament, with their trained intelligence and their judicial insight and impartial indifference to the motives that might have swayed meaner men.

Gallio was a brother of Seneca, the famous philosopher and statesman and one of the noblest and most human of the Stoics. In any age when virtue was regarded with scorn they held before men a high moral ideal. Seneca speaks of his brother as a man of intellectual accomplishments and a most winning personality. He seems to have acquired both among his friends and among strangers the epithet of 'the charming Gallio': 'This is more,' says the poet Statius, 'than to have given Seneca to the world, and to have begotten the sweet Gallio.' 'No mortal man is so sweet to any man as he is to all mankind,' his brother Seneca writes of him. And again, 'Even those who love my brother Gallio to the very utmost of their power yet do not love him enough.'

With a light word, he took
The hearts of men in thrall;
And, with a golden look,
Welcomed them, at his call
Giving their love, their strength, their all.[1]

1. Let us look at the brief narrative before us. Paul had been preaching every Sabbath day in the synagogue and making many converts. His success roused opposition amongst those Jews who refused to listen to his message. Then had come the conversion of Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, and his whole household, to the Christian faith. This had been the last straw, and the Jews had resolved to take active measures against the Apostle. The psychological moment had now arrived. Gallio had just entered upon his duties and the Jews had received information from Rome regarding his character—his amiability, his kindly disposition.

It was usual for a newly-appointed ruler to go a long way to please his subjects, and the Jews

[1] Lionel Johnson.

had good hopes of success. Their plan was to seize Paul at one of his open-air meetings and drag him before the judgment seat of Gallio. Headed by Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue and successor to Crispus, the Jews surrounded Paul and rushed him through the streets to the place of judgment. This incident naturally created great excitement among the people, and many Greeks joined the mob.

We can imagine the disdain with which Gallio would look upon the struggle. The whole business would appear as one more instance of that hot-headed religious fanaticism for which the Jews were famous. Paul's opponents bring him before the Court charged with an offence against the Roman Law, but Gallio knows enough about Jews to suspect their disinterested concern for the imperial administration, and 'when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews: If indeed it were a matter of wrong or wicked villainy, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you. But if they are questions about words and names and your own law look to it yourselves. I am not minded to be a judge of these matters.' The case is dismissed. The Greeks were delighted at the issue. They disliked the Jews; and by way of expressing their sympathy with Paul, and with the judgment of Gallio, they laid hold of Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, mobbed him 'and beat him before the judgment seat.' 'And Gallio cared for none of these things.' Fanatical zeal, strife and hot temper, disputes about words and names—Gallio was indifferent to these things. He acted with commendable discretion from the standpoint of Roman administration. Nevertheless he dismissed that day an incident which was a symptom of one of the profoundest revolutions which history records; it was the birth of a movement which, within a few centuries, would be standing firm amidst the crumbling of Rome, and rendering obsolete the majestic principles of Stoicism. That is how history unfolds itself. Gallio cared for none of these things. But we who stand at a different point in history know that there was something there worth caring about.

If thou hadst known in those far-distant days,
Which now lie buried with the long-dead past;
If thou hadst known how wistful was the gaze
Love turn'd on thee, oh! wouldst thou then have cast
One swift responsive glance, and thus have seen
Life's possibility?—It might have been![1]

There are two or three features of that Corinthian dispute which would be alien to Gallio's temper of mind.

2. All through the strange and bitter history of the Jews there emerges this great assertion, that religion is something to be zealous about; it is an earnest business, a life-and-death matter. It is marked by much misunderstanding of God and arrogance concerning their own destiny, but from beginning to end it testifies to the truth that when God enters into a life it is like the coming of a fire. Henceforth things are important only in so far as they are transfigured by that blaze. Now Gallio had never known religion like that. There was nothing in Stoicism which set men on fire about it. It encouraged splendid virtues, but it failed to kindle passion, and with all its idealism there is nothing in it suggestive of a living God who is setting alight men's hearts and lives. And isn't there a lot of religion like that about to-day—if it is worth calling religion? Do you remember that when the disciples looked upon Jesus they instinctively recalled the cry of a Psalmist and applied it to their Lord? 'The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.' Do we say with Augustine, 'Thou hast touched me and I am on fire for Thy peace'? But it is the secret of the emergence of Christianity as a religion of power from the chaos of that ancient world, and it is only by such overwhelming earnestness for God and for the things of God that the Church will win its way through the tasks which face it to-day, and find a faith adequate for human need.

¶ We need to-day what the Chinese convert told the missionary his people wanted—'Men with hot hearts to tell us of the love of Christ.'

Enthusiasm's the best thing, I repeat;
Only, we can't command it; fire and life
Are all, dead matter's nothing, we agree:
And be it a mad dream or God's very breath,
The fact's the same,—belief's fire, once in us,
Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself.[2]

3. This dispute was also the symptom of a new feature in religion—the dawning of man's

[1] Una, *In Life's Garden*, 68.
[2] Browning, *Bishop Blougram's Apology*.

responsibility for others. There would have been no riot that day if Paul had been willing to keep Christ to himself. But that was the last thing he could do. This is an experience alien to a mind like that of Gallio and to many a modern mind which cannot understand why Christians must be worrying about other people's welfare. Why cannot they mind their own business? But the Christian is moved by this concern for others simply because he is trying to mind his own business. Only he has been awakened to a bigger conception of what his business is.

> I knew that Christ had given me birth
> To brother all the souls of earth.

'The love of Christ constraineth us . . . that we should no longer live unto ourselves.' Mind your own business. Yes, but what is my business? Do you remember the answer given by the ghost of Jacob Marley? 'Business! it cried. Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance and benevolence were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!'

Christianity spells the end of all purely self-centred religion. It is true that our responsibility towards others is grounded in a deeper relationship—the relationship of the soul to God; but the awakening to the claims of others is an integral part of the one religious experience. Christianity gave birth to a love for humanity in which there was neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female. Here is the man Paul under the influence of a new experience setting out almost alone to bind together the heterogeneous subjects of the Roman empire in a new fellowship of the Spirit.

4. But the final significance of this scene, and that which gathers together all the rest, lies in the fact that it was occasioned by the emergence into religious history of a new name—the name of Jesus Christ. 'If they are questions about words and names,' said Gallio, 'I am not minded to be a judge of these matters.' But this time there was a name at issue which denoted the most significant Personality which has ever confronted men. The scene takes place at a time when the name of Jesus is just coming to the ears of the Roman authorities outside Judea. Some years later we read in the letters of Pliny, governor of Bithynia, that the name of Christ is causing trouble in his part of the Empire, and he writes to Rome for instructions. The reply is a model of Roman tolerance. Christians are not to be hunted out, anonymous charges are not to be considered, and where offences are definitely proved there is to be ample pardon if the adherents of this new sect simply renounce the name of Christ. But Pliny explains that it appears to be an understood thing amongst these strange people that none of those who are really Christians could ever be induced to curse the name of Christ. And the tolerant Roman records the fact with mild surprise. Here and there over the Empire this new name is appearing, and wherever it occurs there are men and women zealous enough, fanatical enough, to live and die for it and for the love of God and man for which it stands. The man whose aim is philosophical poise, self-sufficiency, imperturbability, cannot enter into this passion for Jesus. But Gallio is left behind as a pathetic monument of a crumbling age, and the future is with the men who care for Christ.

Apollos

Acts xviii. 24.—'A certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, a learned man' (R.V.).

In Apollos we have a man of marked individuality who at once attracts our attention. We have various phrases that more or less conceal our ignorance of the subtle quality that charms us. We call it personal magnetism when we cannot otherwise distinguish the element of power. Apollos had the note of distinction. He was a marked man in any gathering, and left his impress whenever he spoke. A man who could divide honours with Paul in Corinth is worthy of study.

Apollos was a Jew of Alexandria, where there was a large and wealthy Jewish colony. If he belonged to the class that set a high value on Greek culture, he would learn grammar and rhetoric from Greek teachers; and he would become acquainted with the main ideas of the Greek philosophy then dominant. Even as a Jew, his education and his worship would differ materially from those of his brethren in Jerusalem. Though still exulting in the old name

of Hebrew, the speech of his fathers would be comparatively strange to him. When he read the Sacred Books, it would be in what we have learnt to call the Septuagint, the Old Testament in Greek. His ignorance of the speech of Palestine would keep him from studying the traditions of the elders, the casuistic disputes of Pharisees and Sadducees, of Hillel and of Shammai, in the schools of Jerusalem. Indeed, Alexandria had an advantage over Jerusalem in this respect, being less rigidly bound by Rabbinical interpretations. In Alexandria the scholar would study the sacred books themselves, and not merely elaborate commentaries upon those books. So, while Paul was sitting at the feet of Gamaliel, growing into the strictest Pharisaism, we may think of Apollos as drinking in new knowledge and wider thoughts from the lips of Philo, the great Jewish philosopher. The mutual relations of Jews and Gentiles in Alexandria were among the providential preparations for the spread of Christianity. In the midst of these influences Apollos was brought up; and the accomplishments thus acquired were of essential service to him in his future work. Even if we consider Alexandria only as a school of high education, a resort of learned men, and a place affording opportunities for the training of the mind, it is instructive to observe how God made use of such opportunities in preparing His servant for his appointed work.

1. We first hear of Apollos at Ephesus. When he is introduced to us he is a preacher of a remarkably forceful and eloquent sort, a great master of assemblies. But the peculiar thing about him was the message he preached. He spoke and taught carefully the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John. He had been baptized by John, believed, as John did, that Jesus was the promised Messiah, but apparently he had not heard of the Resurrection, as he certainly had heard nothing of the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost. It was an imperfect gospel Apollos had to preach, and he himself was a mere babe in Christ.

¶ His intention was beyond criticism, but his equipment was incomplete. How reminiscent of Wesley's comment on his missionary endeavours in Georgia: 'I who went to America to convert others was never myself converted to God,' especially in the light of the later note, 'I am not sure of this!' Apollos went to Ephesus to teach others, and he learned that he himself stood in need of a teacher.[1]

One day this man was speaking boldly in the synagogue at Ephesus. He preached to the Jews who assembled there that these were Messianic days, and with fervent eloquence exhorted them to repent. It was mighty and effective preaching in its way, but there were two people in his congregation who knew that it would become mightier yet if only Apollos knew the whole truth about Jesus. So Aquila and Priscilla 'took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.' It required a great deal of tact on the part of Aquila and Priscilla, and it demanded modesty and humility on the part of Apollos. But that is what happened: the Alexandrian sat at the feet of the tent-maker and his wife while they spoke to him of the Lord's death and resurrection and of that baptism—mightier far than John's—the baptism with the Holy Ghost and with power! If Apollos was a mighty preacher before, with such themes he must have been irresistible.

2. After his enlightenment and baptism, Apollos determined to leave Ephesus. To have resumed teaching there at once would plainly have been difficult; moreover, Paul was shortly to arrive, and Apollos could be employed with more profit elsewhere. He desired to go to Corinth, and the Ephesian brethren 'encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to receive him.' So Apollos left Ephesus before Paul arrived to fulfil his three years' ministry there, and crossed to the Church at Corinth, which Paul had already established.

At Corinth Apollos worked with notable success. 'He helped them much which had believed through grace.' And he was able to utilize his 'mighty knowledge' of the Old Testament for a new and nobler purpose; 'he powerfully confuted the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.' He could not have chosen a place more suitable for his work. It was a place where his talents would have a peculiar usefulness. It was a centre of commerce, it was a town also of great intellectual activity. And in both these respects it resembled Alexandria, with whose inhabitants Apollos was so familiar.

[1] H. S. Seekings, *The Men of the Pauline Circle*, 111.

From his early experience he knew precisely what methods would avail best, both with the merchants and the philosophers, and within a short time he gained a position of great influence. But the very success of his work had an unexpected and unfortunate result. Against his wish, he was made to figure as the rival of Paul. But Apollos wholly refused to accept the position. With Christianity as a creed he had learnt also the practice of Christian love. But for this, the temptation to a man of his abilities to figure as the leader, rather than as Paul's assistant, must have been almost irresistible. Now, however, it had no strength against him. Finding, despite his efforts, that the party spirit grew, he took an heroic step to end the evil. With a fine sense of loyalty he gave up his work in Corinth, and returned to Ephesus. As a matter of fact the Apostle with equal unselfishness begged Apollos to go back again, so complete and unhesitating was his confidence in him. But Apollos refused until all this partisan spirit died out of the Church. For this we like him all the better. There is something finer than being an eloquent preacher, and that is being a loyal and loving soul.

¶ General Grant had been for several months in front of Petersburg, apparently accomplishing nothing, while General Sherman had captured Atlanta, and completed his grand 'march to the sea.' Then arose a strong cry to promote Sherman to Grant's position as lieutenant-general. Hearing of it, Sherman wrote to Grant, 'I have written to John Sherman [his brother] to stop it. I would rather have you in command than any one else. I should emphatically decline any commission calculated to bring us into rivalry.' Grant replied, 'No one would be more pleased with your advancement than I; and if you should be placed in my position, and I put subordinate, it would not change our relations in the least. I would make the same exertion to support you that you have done to support me, and I would do all in my power to make your cause win.' [1]

This is practically all we know about Apollos, except the reference to him in the letter to Titus, where the Apostle gives directions that he is to be helped on a journey he was about to undertake. Tradition adds that he revisited Corinth and became bishop of that city; and some conjecture that he was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

[1] O. S. Marden, *Architects of Fate*, 448.

3. What are we told of Apollos as a preacher?

(1) *He was eloquent.*—The outstanding fact is his native gift of eloquence, polished by training in oratory and rhetoric; and all this native talent and acquired art Apollos devoted to the task of preaching the gospel. There was no preacher in the Church of those early days to touch Apollos. None could draw such crowds or subdue and move them when they were drawn. The gift to the Church of an eloquent preacher is a great bestowment of God. And from time to time He bestows such men upon His Church, men whose words have power to touch the heart, and who by the power of the Spirit turn many to righteousness.

¶ I once had an impressive experience sitting on the seat behind the pulpit in St George's, Edinburgh, when Whyte was preaching to the great packed church. I could not see his face, yet I could follow with exactness all the ever-shifting play of sunshine and shadow that kept passing over it. Apparently he frowned, for all these listening faces darkened. And then his must have cleared, for all these others suddenly lit up. There they were, so mastered, so absorbed, so lost in the sermon, so one with him, that, all unconsciously, they acted as a perfect mirror of his every mood.[1]

What Luke here says about Apollos gives us the secret of powerful and popular preaching; he was eloquent, he was mighty in the Scriptures, he was fervent in spirit. Now eloquence is an endowment. In its noblest form it is conferred only upon few. But even though we may not possess that magic gift, the man of plain speech can become a mighty preacher if he is fervent in spirit and mighty in the Scriptures.

(2) *He was fervent in spirit.*—There must be earnestness and conviction and passion in a man's soul. He must feel what he says. The intensity of his conviction must lend a certain glow and warmth to his speech.

This is the personal condition of success in preaching. A man must feel the vital importance of what he preaches so as to be able to preach with enthusiasm. In a word, the condition of successful preaching is a vivid sense of the wonder and worth of Christ's salvation in the preacher's own soul. If a man has no

[1] A. J. Gossip, *In Christ's Stead*, 65.

such wondering sense of the amazing grace of Christ in his own soul he will talk coldly and listlessly about the most tremendous realities. Unless a man has such a sense of wonder, he will discuss salvation as if it were a matter of small concern.

¶ 'It is a lamentable case,' says Richard Baxter, 'that in a message from the God of heaven of everlasting moment to the souls of men we should behave ourselves so weakly, so unhandsomely, so imprudently and so slightingly that the whole business should miscarry in our hands, and God should be dishonoured, and His work disgraced, and sinners rather hardened than converted.'

In these testing times we need a baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire, a warming of the heart, zeal, enthusiasm, passion. The dealer in amiable superfluities and trivialities, the dilettante in the pulpit, will be a thing of scorn to men who know the realities of life and death, of sin and salvation. The Apostle, writing to the Romans, commends this fervency—zeal—as one of the marks of sincerity.

(3) *He was mighty in the Scriptures.*—If 'fervent in spirit' was the personal preparation, 'mighty in the scriptures' points to the equipment. He had not as big a Bible as ours, for the Scriptures in which he was taught and disciplined were the Scriptures of the Old Testament. But those Scriptures Apollos knew in and out. It was this intimate knowledge of the Scriptures that was the common ground between him and Priscilla and Aquila.

¶ D. L. Moody was not as great a technical scholar as some men, but he knew how to use the sword of the Spirit with tremendous power; it was no Saul's armour to this David. Spurgeon was as remarkable for his knowledge of the Scriptures as for his skill as a preacher; his Treasury of David is a treasury indeed. Alexander Maclaren's 'Expositions of Holy Scripture' reveal the richness of Scripture knowledge possessed by this prince of preachers. John A. Broadus was another preacher of great pulpit power who gloried in the Scriptures. The last lecture that Broadus delivered to his New Testament class in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was on Apollos. He made a thrilling appeal to young ministers to be 'mighty in the Scriptures.' [1]

[1] A. T. Robertson, *Types of Preachers in the New Testament*, 15.

Chapter by chapter and verse by verse in those wonderfully interesting talks must the three people have gone through the Messianic prophecies, enabling Aquila and his wife to show how almost every detail of the actual Passion, as they related it, had been foretold in the prophetical books. And thus, as one point after another was verified, blank incredulity gave way to doubt, and doubt became hesitating assent, and assent rose to overmastering conviction. The work was done, and henceforth every page of his beloved Scriptures glowed with a new meaning for him. Now the message which he had to deliver was infinitely enriched.

The core and centre of Scripture is Christ, and preaching is at its mightiest when Christ is its theme. And that is what ministers of the Church in these testing times need, that with a new fervour of spirit they may preach Christ and Him crucified. With such preaching the Church shall go forth conquering and to conquer.

What was Lacking?

Acts xix. 1, 2.—'And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.'

THE small isolated body of twelve disciples to whom St Paul put this question were probably disciples of John the Baptist, who had migrated to Ephesus and had been there left in a religious backwater for many years. They—or their fathers—had left the Holy Land before the ministry of Jesus had carried the teachings of their master to a higher plane. They knew nothing about the tragedy of Calvary; they had missed the thrill of the Resurrection; they had not been privileged to share in the experience of the company in the Upper Room who had communed with the Risen Lord, and had been baptized with Power through the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. They were a typical instance of what in biological language is called arrested development. The motive-power of John's ministry had remained with them, but it had not been vitalized and enriched with the mightier stream of Christian experience.

1. What did the baptism of John mean to them? It meant for those Ephesians that they

henceforth set themselves to oppose within themselves every evil impulse or appetite or imagination. It meant that they had taken a side, and that the right side, in the great conflict which is always going on in the human race between the good and the evil. It meant that, of the two roads that lie before all of us, they had definitely chosen the high road, the road of self-restraint, of purity, of cleanness, of honour; in short, the obedience of the spirit as against the obedience of the flesh. Now, we might very well ask: Was not that enough? Ought not the Apostle to have been satisfied? *Is* it not enough, is it not all that Christ asks of any of ourselves, that in loyalty to Him we shall set ourselves against the dominion of sin in our own members? Notice that Paul does *not* rebuke these Christian people of Ephesus for the defectiveness of their religious knowledge. He does not tell them that they were wrong to receive the baptism of John. He does not tell them that it is nothing in the sight of God that a man does his best to be a pure-minded, clean-handed man. He does not say that mere morality is nothing. He simply says in effect that he can show them how to do better, that he can put them on the only way of really living the life to which they are aspiring. If a man knows no other way of meeting the evil within himself and in the world, he must of course go on doing the best he can. He must buffet his body, he must renounce, refuse, abstain. If need be, he must even lock himself up, or appoint a keeper to take charge of him, or he must take to his heels if suddenly he finds himself in a place of temptation. A man must do all these things, and more, if he knows no better way. But, says the Apostle, there is a better way. But, says the Church of Christ to all the children of men, there is a better way. And what is that better way? Just this: 'I believe in the Holy Ghost.' If we see a man setting out in a rowing-boat to cross the Atlantic, preparing to row all the way to America, we may not say to that man, 'You are doing wrong,' for in a sense he is doing nothing positively wrong. But if the man's one object in life is to get to America, and if he is proposing to row to America simply because he does not know of any other way of going, then we can say to that man, 'You can do better'—we live in a world where for the sake of voyagers God has prepared the winds.

2. The belief in the Holy Ghost is simply the thorough-going belief in God; and it is difficult to see how one can say he believes in God and yet refuse to seek, at least, that happiness and completeness which come only with faith in the Holy Ghost. Faith in the Holy Ghost is simply faith in the Holy God who is alive and actual in this world. What the writers of the New Testament bear witness to is that God the Spirit was revealed to them as *a personal communion*. After Pentecost they had the inward power instead of the outward presence. The companionship of the Master became the fellowship of the Lord. The Spirit was God in personal action, bearing upon them in a personal way, and communing with them in a true fellowship. When we say that we believe in God, what do we mean? Is it only that we believe that at some time or other, some One gave this world its initial spin—to set everything agoing? Do we mean only that the necessary laws of the human mind make it imperative upon us to conclude that a universe such as we have must have had an original cause—and that cause we call God? That is not the kind of faith that will help us over stiles. In fact, it amounts to nothing more than the acknowledgment on our part that we are not prepared to deny that this world of ours is the product of some adequate Cause. But that is really not faith, that is Rationalism.

¶ George Eliot said that the Lord Jesus, when He was upon earth, gave a sort of impulse to the race, and that impulse remains to our own day and, therefore, He lives. It is something like an engine shunting on the railway. The engine gives the train a sudden impact and then stops. And the trucks continue on the strength of the impact given, while the engine remains dead. And, says George Eliot and all who believe in her teaching, it is perfectly true that He is with us now in a dumb, vague, blessed impulse. Is that your Jesus? If I may recall my illustration of the train, I will tell you of my Jesus. When the Lord came and put Himself on the train He went with it, and He is with it now. 'I am with you, not merely as some dumb, contributory impulse, a dying dynamic; I am with you a living presence, conscious, intelligent, knowing you and offering the powers of the Infinite to save you and to complete the plan of your life and lift you into a life of holiness with God.'[1]

[1] J. H. Jowett.

Suppose we said there was some actual human being in whom we believed. What would be inferred from these words? It cannot be that all that is meant when we say we believe in a person is that we believe that the person exists. For if that is all that we mean, it is of absolutely no consequence—in fact, it is mere nonsense. When we say that we believe in a human being, it means that we would trust our interests to him: we believe in his character, in his attitude to ourselves; we mean, that if ever we were at a loss, in straits or difficulties or some private distress, we would be safe to go to that person. That is what believing in some one means, not that he merely exists, but that we trust him, that we would not be afraid or ashamed to take him into our confidence, if, in some emergency either of sorrow or of joy, we felt the need of some one with whom to relieve the stress and loneliness of our heart. That is what we must mean when we say we believe in any one. And it ought not to be otherwise in the matter of belief in God.

That is not belief in God which simply means that some mysterious and awful Power created the heavens and the earth. That is simple science, worldly wisdom, common sense. That is not even complete belief in God which means belief in a mysterious and Holy One who interfered notably in the history of the children of Israel, the records of which interference we have in our Bible. That is a kind of philosophy of history. The only true and sincere belief in God is this: I believe in God, in the living God, in a holy actual Presence which is here and now, around me and over me, and beating at the doors of my heart, coming up to the windows of my soul, searching for me, waiting for me, asking me definitely and particularly to throw open the door of my heart. There is no real belief in God which stops short of the happy confession and pledge: 'I believe in the Holy Ghost.'

¶ In one of Edna Lyall's novels, *We Two*, we have the story of Erica Raeburn. Erica is the daughter of Luke Raeburn, the sceptic; and she has been taught from infancy to despise all holy things. But as life, with its stress and struggle, goes on, she finds that she cannot satisfy her soul with denials and negations. 'At last,' Edna Lyall says, 'Erica's hopelessness, her sheer desperation, drove her to cry to the Possibly Existent.' She stood at the open window of her little room, looking out into the summer night. Before she knew what had happened, she was praying!

'O God,' she cried, 'I have no reason to think that Thou art, except that there is such fearful need of Thee. I can see no single proof in all the world that Thou art here. But *if* Thou art, O Father, *if* Thou art, help me to know Thee! Show me what is true!'

A few days later the answer came. Erica was at the British Museum, making some extracts, in the ordinary course of her business, from the *Life of Livingstone*. All at once she came upon the extract from Livingstone's *Journal* in which he speaks of his absolute reliance upon the text, 'Lo, I am with you alway.' 'It is the word,' says Livingstone, 'it is the word of a gentleman of the strictest and most sacred honour, and there's an end of it!' The words profoundly affected Erica. 'Lo, I am with you alway!' They represented, not a Moral Principle, nor a Logical Proposition, but a Living Presence!

Exactly how it came to her, Erica never knew, nor could she put in words the story of the next few minutes. When God's great sunrise finds us out, we have need of something higher than human speech: there *are* no words for it. All in a moment, the Christ who had been to her merely a noble character of ancient history became to her the most real and vital of all living realities. It was like coming into a new world; even dingy Bloomsbury seemed beautiful. Her face was so bright, so like the face of a happy child, that more than one passer-by was startled by it, lifted for a moment from sordid cares into a purer atmosphere.[1]

The Experience of the Spirit

Acts xix. 2.—'And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.'

1. This was the answer given by the twelve Ephesian disciples to St Paul's question, 'Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?' Only half-taught the meaning of discipleship, they had never yet heard of Pentecost and the great gift. If St Paul asked us this question, how would we answer him? Not, assuredly, we say, like these Ephesian Christians. Have

[1] F. W. Boreham, *A Casket of Cameos*, 137.

we not been baptized with the Christian sacrament? Have we not creeds which have been for years the expression of our faith?

Sharers of the apostolic faith, can we dare to claim that we are sharers also of the apostolic experience which found such wonderful expression in the New Testament, and was, we know, the first marvellous stage in the life of the historic Church? There are few of us who, if we are entirely honest and sincere, will not confess that there is nothing that we find harder than a living faith in the Holy Ghost. Not, indeed, that we deny Him. But not to deny is not of necessity experimentally to believe. And however hard we struggle to escape from it, we cannot help being affected by the spirit of our age; we drink in its influences with every breath. What is there about us as children of our time which makes it difficult to believe?

In the first place, we worship *mechanism*. We regard the world itself as a huge machine. We look at Nature, and through all its majestic order we trace the activities of a superbly contrived system. We take it to pieces and explain how it all works. Man himself, to our thinking, is a mechanism, and he is greatest when as a mechanician he creates marvellous machines. Human society is an organization, and if through the pressing facts of industrial unrest we are gloomily conscious that it is out of gear, we think of its repair, not its regeneration. It is out of joint, and it must be put right, not redeemed. The Church needs order, a revised liturgy, reorganized finance, more than renewal of spiritual energy—all of them necessary, but none of them of the first importance.

¶ We live in a day of machinery and mechanism, when even religious life tends to be steam-driven, and the prophet has largely given way to the expert organizer. Our horizon is full of whirling wheels, and wheels within wheels, choking us in a cloud of small dust. Our leaders dream of a great war of wheels, in which the one wheel of their designing will rout and crush all the rest. Our reformers are busy wheelwrights. A new cog here and there, a new type of wheel instead of the old creaking lumber—and their programme is realized. And everywhere men of goodwill are protesting in the name of the Spirit against this multiplication of machinery. Do not tinker at schemes and systems, they say: give us *men*—bold, Spirit-filled, consecrated men, and the machinery can take care of itself.[1]

All day the wheels are droning, turning;
Their wind comes in our faces;
Till our hearts turn, our heads with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places:
And all day the iron wheels are droning,
And sometimes we could pray,
Oh, ye wheels (breaking out in a mad moaning)
Stop! be silent for to-day.

And then, secondly, we are born and bred *rationalists*. Our veneration of reason is almost a superstition. We think we can know only what we can tabulate and explain. We cultivate an immense curiosity, but we have ceased to wonder and to dream. Aspirations are excellent, no doubt, but not vital, and they are only of a sentimental importance compared with the power to know what is practically useful. To succeed is the end of life, and towards that education must be severely turned, unless it is to become an appalling waste of time and talent. The instinct of worship which takes its shoes from off its feet to adore is alien to the spirit of the world in which we live, a world which recks little of the saint who believes in transcendent realities which he can never explain.

¶ A shallow religiousness, the tendency to be content with a bright ethical piety wrongly called practical Christianity, a nice brightly-varnished this-world faith, seems to me to be one of the defects of institutional religion at the present time. We are drifting towards a religion which consciously or unconsciously keeps its eye on humanity rather than on Deity—which lays all the stress on service, and hardly any of the stress on awe; and that is a type of religion which in practice does not wear well. It does little for the soul in those awful moments when the pain and mystery of life are most deeply felt. It does not provide a place for that profound experience which Tauler called 'suffering in God.' It does not lead to sanctity; and sanctity, after all, is the religious goal.[2]

And, thirdly, we are *materialists* to the core. We conceive of well-being for ourselves and for all men in terms of material comfort and

[1] E. Herman, *The Secret Garden of the Soul*, 90.
[2] Evelyn Underhill, *Concerning the Inner Life*.

pleasure and ease. Fullness of bread for every one is our master ideal, and the one struggle in which we are always ready to take a hand is the struggle to achieve prosperity and to be free to please ourselves. If we discuss the Sunday question it is to urge that we need recreation and little beside that. Seek ye first the kingdom of comfort for every man, and then see what place there is in it for the Kingdom of God. When membership in the Christian society seems to imply sacrifice—to send and to preach the gospel to the awakening nations of the East, or to carry out schemes of Church extension at home—it must be sternly kept in its own place, and the Church must be warned off from becoming awkwardly insistent upon obligations which are, of course, the product of the ecclesiastical mind. If they were real we might have to give up our motor-cars, or take less frequent holidays, or live more simply than we do, and forgo hobbies which have become our vital food; and that is absurd. Religion, as every sensible modern man knows, means not the gospel, but better houses, picture-galleries, and plenty of healthy amusement for the poor. And Christianity is a useful instrument for social reform, because its Founder is associated with certain serious reflections upon the danger of riches for those who ought to share them with others.

Then that urgent question comes again, 'Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?' How do we answer it? Somewhat thus. With a suspicious query as to how the question touches our mechanical ideals. Can we rationalize the Holy Ghost and enclose 'it'—for we soon lose sight of the fact of His personality—conveniently within our philosophic schemes? How will all this affect our cold materialism? Are not the Pentecostal fires too hot and likely to scorch us as they fall upon our comfortable lives? And Pentecost is all so full of mystery—so elusive, so intangible to our rationalizing minds. The one saving clause in it all is that deep down in our souls there is an uneasy feeling that there is something wrong.

¶ Rudolf Eucken tells us of 'the universal weakness of our inner life compared with the colossal capacity of a scientific, technical, and practical kind. . . . We trouble incessantly for the betterment of political and social relations, but we come to a painful halt wherever the final aims and highest happiness of man are at stake. . . . Our day is also full of inner problems, and we have not grown strong enough to attack them; we sink back ever anew into the petty-human level, and fail to reach a genuine content of life—fail to reach consolidation and greatness.'[1]

2. We contrast life as we live it with words like these: 'The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, through the power of the Holy Ghost.' We feel our religion is only a parody of what it ought to be, and there seems to be no way by which we can climb to those high table-lands of spiritual experience where souls are filled and changed by the Spirit of God. Is there no way? To every Christian the answer must be clear and unequivocal; we stand possessors of the Holy Spirit, however little we may know of the conscious experience that He is ours. And the road lies open to the experience. The experience which the first Christians had of the Holy Ghost sprang out of their faith in the Risen and Ascended Christ, and that faith in the Father in heaven into which He had led them. Pentecost was the sequel of the manifestation of the Son of Man, and all that He had taught of God. There is first the Son of God—made in the likeness of our manhood, that we may be made like unto Him—with His human voice which speaks to our deepest selves in human tones, and feet that have trodden our stony human ways, and hands that have wrought like ours at human toil. Man, true man, and yet eternal God—yes, we believe on Him—the unapproachable goodness, and yet accessible to the very sinfulest and weakest of us all. And He brings us to God. The eternal life above and within the universe, so real to Him, in Him becomes real to us also. 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' No mere infinite power beyond the world's life; no mere source of being and all that is; but an eternal Heart, our Father which is in heaven. But there is something beyond and above even this. God is Spirit, and so are we. We are more than body, more than reason and desire. Our souls are full of voices from far away. The vessel of our human being will no more keep us self-contained, and enclose us so that in and by ourselves we live our true life, than a cup will catch and contain the infinite sea. We must brim over into infinity. We must live in fellow-

[1] *The Truth of Religion*, 611.

ship with the eternal Spirit, or sundered and apart we die.

I am an emptiness for thee to fill;
My soul, a cavern for thy sea. . . .
I have done nought for thee, am but a want;
But thou who art rich in giving, canst give claims;
And this same need of thee which thou hast given,
Is a strong claim on thee to give thyself.[1]

God has been given: the Spirit is here. That is the meaning of our yearning for a deeper, higher, holier life, of our upward groping after the highest, of our feeling after some one whom we dimly know to be God. Not a God above us only, infinite, eternal Fatherhood; not a God with us only, Son of Man and Son of God; but God within us, Life and Spirit, in the secret centres of thought and purpose and desire and will.

He who sent the Son who loved us and died for us and rose again—'how shall he not with him freely give us all things?' Freely for thy spirit the Spirit Himself is thine.

Sons of Sceva

Acts xix. 15.—'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?'

THERE is a difference in the original between the two words for 'know.' It is hard to say whether anything can be made of the difference; but the Revised Version renders it in the margin—'Jesus I recognize, and Paul I know.' Perhaps we may fairly paraphrase it thus: 'When you name the name of Jesus, I recognize it only too well as the name of the Holy One of God, as *the* name of power and of terror to all the tribes of evil: when you speak of Paul, I know him well enough as the boldest and most earnest of the servants of God who proclaim the way of salvation.' Even in this brief and frenzied utterance there is a distinction made between the Master and the servant, and the very choice of words indicates that they do not stand on the same level.

There is nothing more hopelessly obscure than the subject of demoniacal possession, and therefore nothing more unprofitable to discuss. But in the story of the sons of Sceva we shall all agree in recognizing a profound and permanent truth of religion. Whatever account may be given of the words of the text, they form the genuine confession of the powers of evil which afflict mankind—half-unwittingly made and half-unwillingly wrung from them!

1. The powers of evil recognize *Jesus*. Where He really is, they cannot be. They cannot hold their ground for a moment against Him, and they know it. Wherever and whenever Jesus enters into the soul through faith and grace; wherever and whenever He dominates the life through holy obedience, there the powers of evil must surrender, for they are not able to resist. That is always true, and it is the charter of our spiritual liberty in this direction. The spirit of evil may have obtained a frightful power and control over this or that individual—through intemperance, for example, and self-indulgence—but the spirit of evil will always have to say, 'Jesus I know'; and where that Stronger One is really present to succour and defend His own, there the spirit of evil, however strong, must yield.

¶ Dr T. R. Glover tells a story of an agnostic friend of his who set out to save a drunkard in order to prove that a man's habits could be transformed without the aid of religion. The man was so weak that he was utterly unable to pass a public-house unless some one had hold of his arm, and the only way of saving him was to give him continuous comradeship, take him for walks, sit up with him at night, and stand by him all the time. If his guardian went up to London for a day he immediately went out and got drunk. Still, the experiment went forward, and the optimistic unbeliever declared that he would stick to his friend and save him without any Christian assistance. One day Dr Glover met him and said: 'What about your drunken friend?' 'Ah,' was the reply, 'I was getting on fairly well with the job when a lot of rough people in red jerseys arrived with an atrocious brass band. Somehow these repulsive fellows got hold of him—I don't know exactly what happened, but they seem to have made him kneel down and pray. Anyhow, he can walk past a pub by himself now.'[1]

And then, in a somewhat different sense, 'Paul I know.' There was, indeed, no mistake about

[1] George Macdonald.

[1] F. A. Atkins, *The Durable Satisfactions of Life*, 13.

him. His tremendous moral earnestness seemed to Festus a kind of madness born of too much study: it seemed something very different to the powers of evil. They dread moral earnestness as the one thing which cripples them, disarms them, reduces them to impotence. They knew Paul to their cost because he was in such deadly earnest, and because his earnestness was quite disinterested. Had he been in any way 'interested'; had he striven as he did for self, or for any of the extensions of self such as family or party or sect, his earnestness—though inconvenient and dangerous to them—had yet not been deadly. Being disinterested, it was. They had to yield, to let go, to retire from the field. Always and everywhere, in the face of disinterested earnestness, the powers of evil have to go.

2. This brings us to the sons of Sceva, and the fierce contemptuous demand, 'Who are *ye*?' followed up by their ignominious overthrow and flight. Well, if we inquire who they were, they seem to have been fairly respectable persons—as things go in this queer world. Their father was a Jewish ecclesiastic of some importance. They themselves had taken up exorcism, or casting out of devils, as a profession. It was a very good profession—supposing you could make anything of it. To cast out devils, even in a very few instances, is to deserve the profound gratitude of mankind. It was also a paying profession. Whether really successful or no, it brought opportunities of gain and influence. That is probably why the sons of Sceva took it up. One must do something for a living; and if nothing else suggests itself, one may do worse than undertake to cast out devils. Moreover, they were not bigoted—these men. They showed an enlightened self-interest very commendable in its way. Experience showed that even the name of Solomon was not so effective a name to conjure with as that name, so hateful to the Jews, which was always on the lips of St Paul. So they put aside their national and religious prejudices, and began to invoke the holy name of Jesus. In order that the evil spirits might not plead ignorance, or pretend to be in any doubt, they said expressly, 'In the name of Jesus whom Paul preacheth.' There was surely something curiously business-like, and in its way simple-minded too, in that way of putting it. They did not pretend to believe in Jesus themselves: but they did not see why that should make any difference to the evil spirits. If they used the correct formula surely the evil spirits would have to go? But it did not prove to be the case: on the contrary *they* had to go themselves, naked and wounded.

The absence or feebleness of personal faith is the explanation of much failure in so-called Christian work. No doubt there may be other causes for the want of success, but after all allowance is made for these, it still remains true that the chief reason why the gospel message is often proclaimed without casting out demons is that it is proclaimed with faltering faith, tentatively and without assured confidence in its power, or imitatively, with but little, if any, inward experience of the magic of its spell. The demons have ears quick to discriminate between Paul's fiery accents and the cold repetition of them. Incomparably the most powerful agency which any man can employ in producing conviction in others is the utterance of his own intense conviction. 'If you wish me to weep, your own tears must flow,' said the Roman poet.

¶ It was doubtless his evidently intense conviction of the absolute truth and the positive certainty of what he preached, that day after day drew crowds of the people of Boston to listen to the evangelist. We are given to understand that on the whole the intellectual atmosphere of Boston is not favourable to the growth of the full assurance of faith. Yet after all, notwithstanding Mrs Humphry Ward's dictum that 'the force of things is against the certain people,' men do feel the magnetism of the preacher to whom the things he speaks of are obviously the supreme realities of life, which he himself unwaveringly believes and lives by, and which they also must unwaveringly believe and live by, or else incur incalculable spiritual loss. 'For if the trumpet give an uncertain voice, who shall prepare himself for war?' [1]

It is as true to-day as it was long ago in Ephesus that the evil spirits 'feel the Infant's hand from far Judea's land,' and are forced to confess, 'Jesus we know and Paul we know'; but to other would-be exorcists their answer is, 'Who are ye?' 'When a strong man armed keepeth his house, his goods are in peace.' There is but 'One stronger than he who can come upon him, and having overcome him, can

[1] H. Varley, *Henry Varley's Life-Story*, 186.

take from him all his armour wherein he trusted and divide the spoils,' and that is the Christ, at whose name, faithfully spoken, 'the devils fear and fly.'

A Dream Worth Dreaming

Acts xix. 21.—'I must also see Rome.'

'I MUST also see Rome.' That was no passing desire on the part of St Paul. Those five words sum up one of the great persistent hopes of the Apostle's heart. In his letter to the Christian Church in Rome we find this phrase, 'Having these many years a longing to come unto you.' The presence and growth of such a desire as this is easily accounted for. His experience had taught the Apostle the wisdom of getting to the great centres of Roman life and rule. With his intense zeal for the spread of the gospel, with his keen eye for life's most true and spacious opportunities, with his splendid courage that faced simply and gladly the perils of the faith, Paul felt that if only he could gain a foothold in the metropolis of the world, if only he could touch the heart of the empire, he would have handled the largest opportunity for service that ever man held.

He had heard much, too, of the Christian community in Rome as he sat and toiled in the workshop of Aquila, and year by year the desire to preach there grew upon him. And year by year it was denied him. But Rome was the dream of his life. And the years of splendid patience and heroic toil rolled on, and the man's hair turned grey, and maybe he thought that the call to the City of the Seven Hills would never come. But it did. And oh! the pathos of it! He entered the city a prisoner in the charge of a centurion. He dwelt there two years before he was tried and evidently acquitted of the charges against him. Then after two or three years of liberty Rome seized him again. This time her temper had changed. Paul was held in a closer captivity, very likely denied a glimpse of the blue sky, till the heedless cruelty of Nero sent this brave soldier of Christ to the glorious shame of martyrdom. That was how the Apostle saw Rome.

1. Every life has its secret hope, its hidden desire. Our work lies, so to speak, in the provinces of life, but our heart often goes out to the capital. Life is not fully expressed for any of us in the routine of our service. It is not measured by the inch-tape of experience. It is larger than these things. It has room for the unrealized. And if we should be very frank with ourselves and each other, we should confess that one of the inspirations and comforts of life for us, especially as we most feel the limitation and difficulty and prosaism of it, is the whisper to our own heart, 'I must also see Rome.'

But the first thing Paul teaches us is this: that only the religion of Jesus Christ can make our dream of Rome worth dreaming. Some people's Rome is not very far away, not very difficult to reach, and not worth the pilgrimage. Rome was the city of a thousand pleasures, where life could become a whirl of new sensations, and the hours were full of colour and sound and change. Rome was the world's great market-place. Rome was the place where a man stood the best chance of honour and office, of promotion and reward. And it was the immensely wealthy and sometimes lavish patron of art and poetry and literature. To the man with a drab experience, or an empty purse, or a disappointed ambition, or a bundle of poems, the solution of life lay in the words, 'I must see Rome.' If the city of our dreams is a city of gaiety or of wealth or of purely personal selfish advancement, then our secret desire is not worthy the heart that holds it.

¶ Lord Byron, crossing the bridge at Venice on a beautiful evening, looking over his shoulder, saw a shooting star. It cleaved a pathway across the darkness and dropped into the waters of Tuscany. The superstition of the day said that people should wish their wish when they saw a star fall, and Byron responded: 'The desire of my heart sprang to my lips; like a panther it gripped me—dazed me—Indulgence.'[1]

But some one may say, 'Surely as long as I do my duty nothing else matters. My time, and my strength, and my resources may belong to others, but my dreams are my own.' That is a very common fiction of the mind, a conception of life that too often is made to justify empty, idle speculation, unfounded forecast of the future that breeds unfaithfulness in the present. It is true that our dreams are our own: and it is just because they are our own, woven of

[1] W. Y. Fullerton, *Life's Dusty Way*, 166.

the very texture of our mind, vitalized by the inner spirit of our life, that they matter so much. A dream is a radical, creative, germinal thing. It does not float as a pleasing nimbus beyond the range and reckonings of our daily activities. It lies at the core of them. We make the mistake of trying to isolate some things in our lives. We cannot do this. Life is one. We cannot dream for ourselves and live for others. We cannot give the world some of our hopes and give God all our service. The Apostle's dream of Rome was bound to have some effect on all that he said and did. And the reason why it did not cloud his outlook or impair his service is found in those few words in his Philippian letter that give us a glimpse of the very innermost of his soul—'For me to live is Christ.' It is true that our ideal has a great deal to do with our conduct, and just as true that our conduct reacts on our ideal; but there is something in the Christian religion so deep that by comparison both these considerations seem to be but on the surface of things. Christianity's great offer to the world is not a splendid ideal, neither is it a perfect ethic; it is a cleansed heart, an inspired will, a sure and certain hope, a new life.

The thought of Rome never made Paul indifferent to the claims of Ephesus or Lystra or many another place where he stayed and toiled. His longing to see Rome was eclipsed by his longing to see the Kingdom of God coming, even as God willed it should come. He hid this hope in his heart, but he never tried to force the fulfilment of it in his life. He knew that the best place for a man is where God puts him. In the Christian life the highest desires keep us faithful to the lowliest duties, and in that faithfulness lies the work of all our days.

Not stirring words, nor gallant deeds alone,
Plain patient work fulfilled that length of life;
Duty, not glory—service, not a throne,
Inspired his effort, set him for the strife.[1]

As we look at Paul's life we can see that a man fails not when his hope is unfulfilled, but when his work is undone. Look at the Apostle, passing along the Appian Way and beneath the shadow of the splendid Porta Capena—at last in the city of his desire. He was an old man; the tale of his years was nearly told, and the night when no man can work was already casting its long grey shadows on his path. But what of that? His desire had long been refused him, but his work had been done. He had never relinquished his dream, but he had never neglected his duty. God had given him to live a life of incomparable value and superb success ere ever his eyes sighted the city that had so often captured his imagination and stimulated his desire.

[1] Clough.

2. It was as a prisoner that Paul reached Rome. And never were chains more suggestive than those he wore. They speak to us of the way the great opportunities of life come to men. To find the freedom of life's large and abundant fulfilment a man must become the prisoner of the Lord. The highest service has ever been given, not to those who have clutched at a crown, but to those who have been willing to wear fetters. Between each of us and the best we hope to be and do there lies much submission and much renunciation.

¶ Gold medallist and specialist, that brilliant young doctor John Bowie surrendered all, that he might be a Good Samaritan on African roads. He contracted diphtheria in trying to save the life of a little child. At the same time the child's mother, who was also his sister, was dying of diphtheria. With death at his own throat he rose and performed an operation to relieve his sister's agony. Together they lie in Nyassaland, their memorial a hospital, a place of healing and of hope. Bowie never regretted setting forth on that adventure. To those who questioned him his answer was: 'Does a slave regret getting his freedom?' Through love and sacrifice, that was his discovery—Freedom.[1]

There are a great many disappointed and embittered people in the world—people who are looking back and wondering whether life has been worth while. So much failure and emptiness, so many thwarted endeavours, so many frustrated hours; and the Rome of their heart's desire farther away than ever it was. Yes, and there are some rich men, famous men, successful men, who have entered the Rome of their youthful dreams to find that there is no joy in its honours, no wealth in its markets, and no peace in its streets. And all of them, the disappointed who have never found the city, and the disenchanted who, passing beneath its

[1] *Methodist Recorder*, 27th September 1923.

gate, have found it a city of mean streets, have made the same mistake—the mistake from which only Christ can save us. They have forgotten that the law of success is the law of sacrifice; that though desire may often be far off, duty is ever near; that the only life in the end unanswered is the life that is daily unfaithful; and that the only way any man comes to his own is by living for others.

Christianity as the Way

Acts xix. 23.—'And about that time there arose no small stir concerning the Way' (R.V.).

The sacred historian is describing a notable occurrence in the life of the great missionary Apostle. St Paul had preached the gospel with marked success in the important city of Ephesus, and already the effect of his preaching was attracting general notice, and even affecting the general life. It was felt that much would have to be changed in the use and wont of Ephesus if this new religion were to replace the established idolatry: that many profitable vested interests, commercial and ecclesiastical, would be endangered; that many comfortable time-honoured customs would be disallowed; that the whole aspect and habit of Ephesian society would be strangely transformed. As the perception of all these probabilities grew in men's minds, they were greatly perturbed. 'About that time there was no small stir concerning the Way.'

1. 'The Way'—it is the oldest of all the names by which the religion of Jesus has been known among men, and it discloses a very important aspect of that religion, an aspect, moreover, which we are at all times but too ready to let slip from the mind. The name is used no fewer than six times in the Book of the Acts, and it is found nowhere else in the New Testament. What did the name suggest? We are reminded that Christianity did not at first impress men in those characters which have been paramount in later ages. The disciples of Christ did not appear to the Jews as conspicuous for some distinctive doctrine which they maintained, nor yet were they supposed to be rigorously organized as members of a Church. Questions of doctrine did not emerge until the earlier enthusiasm of Faith had begun to subside, and Christians found themselves compelled to explain and justify the beliefs which they professed. It was not a detailed theology, nor a masterful Church, which faced men on the morrow of Pentecost, but a new manner of life, 'The Way' of Jesus. Christians arrested the notice of their neighbours by their superior morality. They were clean-living, fraternal, dedicated persons, and these qualities were suggested by the names which were current among them. They called one another 'Saints,' and 'Brethren,' and 'Beloved,' and 'Elect.'

We do not find that the Christians in those first days carried themselves as rebels against the State, or that they preached a crusade against the established system of society, although that system was in many respects confessedly defective. Yet they were unpopular, suspected, and from time to time persecuted. They were unpopular partly because, on their side, they dissociated themselves from so many of the practices and usages of the contemporary world; and partly because, on the side of society, they were boycotted. As the Apocalypse tells us, it was the law of the pagan persecuting society that no man who had not the mark of the beast on his forehead or on his right hand should buy or sell. So the Christians were driven in upon their own company and had to develop a social and economic life for themselves. When we piece together the various scraps of evidence the picture that we get is of something distinctly socialistic in spirit. Every member of the Christian society is required to work for his living. 'If a man will not work, neither let him eat.' But if work could not be found, or men were too old or too sick to do work, then they must be supported from the common fund. To maintain this common fund the great preachers insisted on the principle of Divine justice, not mere charity: the principle that every man should have in return for his work such remuneration as is necessary for life, his fair share of those things which God intends to supply equally to all; and if any man has more than enough for his own support it is the requirement of justice that he should supply the needs of others. Of course, all this was not a political system, enforceable by the law. Its strength lay simply in the moral appeal which the obligation of membership made. It was the attraction of this spirit of brotherhood,

constantly before men's eyes, that brought about the spread and advance of the Church. It was partly that spirit, partly the splendour of their sexual purity, which astonished the heathen world; partly, also, their amazing courage, in spite of many failures, in the face of ignominy, and of death. This spectacle was so great of a transformed human nature, a realized life worthy of men, that those inside the Christian Church naturally formed splendid anticipations of what the world would be when it was converted to Christianity. There could be no more war. There would be a splendid human brotherhood.

So they prophesied. But their prophecies were largely falsified. They left out of account that when it ceased to cost men anything to be Christians their religion would rank in their lives for little. And so it turned out. As soon as it began to be the fashion to be a Christian, as soon as it began even to cost men more to deny Christianity than to confess it, the moral level went down at a run. It must be confessed that the Church was content to offer men a salvation which meant little moral effort, if only they would accept the doctrine and keep the rules. In our own country, with the Reformation there came the idea of a national Church—the Church and nation were to coincide. To be a citizen and to be a Churchman were to be the same thing. So it was that Christian morality was allowed to become the acceptance of a national system, the keeping of the law. Of course there was always the influence of the Bible upon the character of individuals, but, for the most part, to be a Christian and a Churchman meant a certain measure of conformity to certain rites and ceremonies, living as a good Englishman ought to live, and keeping the law. So there was able to grow up a whole industrial system which was not rooted in Christian principles.

2. Now we have come to a time when, on all showing, we must make a fresh start. There is a widespread revolt. It is partly doctrinal, a revolt against Christan doctrine, for which the Church no doubt is in part responsible. But it is also a revolt against all the organized forms of religion, because they have allowed themselves to become associated with an industrial system which seems to the awakened conscience of the masses of men to be a violation of the fundamental spirit of brotherhood and justice and equality of opportunity. It is the task of the Church to-day to go back to its first principles, to understand itself again as the Way, to stand before men proclaiming that it is a way of life. It must think out its moral principles again in the terms of the present-day social and industrial structure.

¶ To-day we are face to face with the question of social brotherhood and industrial democracy. 'What I do say,' wrote Abraham Lincoln, 'is that no man is good enough to govern another without that other's consent.' We have accepted that principle in its political bearing; to-day we are testing it in its social and economic application. 'Give a man power over my whole subsistence,' wrote Alexander Hamilton, 'and you have given him power over my whole mental and moral life.' We, the children, must complete the work of our fathers and must establish social and industrial brotherhood. We must go down and down beneath all mere surface questions of hours and wages, ownership and management, and deal with fundamental human relations. We must honour those relations; we must seek to adjust them in terms of justice and love and brotherhood. This will lead us to remove the handicaps that are upon our fellows. It will secure equality of opportunity for all, and cause just and equitable distribution of the proceeds of industry. The cause of reform is the cause of Christianity, which is not here to keep things as they are, but to make them as they ought to be.[1]

If you ask the average man to-day what the Church stands for, he may be puzzled to answer. We should like him to know that the Church stands for the Bible, for the Creed, for worship. But we should like him to know, first of all, that the Church stands for a certain intelligible type of Christian life, which is possible for every man and woman, but only if they will understand that the way of eternal life is a great adventure, that it involves a serious purpose, and a great moral effort. Somehow, though in certain departments of life the Christian claim has been made and felt, it has not been made and felt exactly in that way. Yet all men have a feeling after the true life. Let them understand what it is. Let them see how it works out in detail. Let them realize the claim it makes on all the selfish, acquisitive, and avari-

[1] S. Z. Batten.

cious instincts in men. It is one of the most marked principles of the gospel that the sins which make people disreputable, like fornication, or drunkenness, or violence, are not worse in God's sight, or more disastrous to the soul, than the sins which are quite consistent with respectability, like avarice, or selfishness, or pride, or jealousy, or uncharitableness. Both alike are obstacles. If men will adhere to them they are final obstacles against the fellowship of God, against true liberty, against sonship. But the disreputable sins are not worse than the respectable sins.

¶ Many of those who sow to the flesh regard their form of sin as trifling compared with the inconsistent and un-Christian graces of those who profess to sow to the spirit. Many a man, for example, who thinks nothing of getting drunk would scorn to do an ungenerous deed or speak a withering word. And it is really a question whether he is not right. One man sins high up in his nature, the other low down; and the vinous spendthrift, on the whole, may be a better man than the acid Christian.[1]

If 'The Way' were made plain would it be any more popular than it was in Judæa of old? One hesitates to say. But, whether or no, if Christianity is to make itself understood, it must make itself understood as 'The Way,' and men must know that they cannot be Christians as a matter of course, but only by the deliberate choice of following Christ.

Vested Interests

Acts xix. 28.—'And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.'

Sir William M. Ramsay, commenting on this incident, says: 'The most sensitive part of "civilized" man is his pocket; and it was there that opposition to Christian changes, or "reforms," began.' In Ephesus the first outburst of violent resentment against the religion of Christ was occasioned by the injury which that religion inflicted, or was believed to inflict, on men's pockets. Christianity 'threatened to extinguish some ancient and respectable trades, and promised no compensation; and thus all the large class that lived off the pilgrims and the temple service was marshalled against the new party, which threatened the livelihood of all.'[1]

¶ In New York City a Northern merchant called out Mr May, the philanthropist, from an anti-slavery meeting, and said to him: 'Mr May, we are not such fools as not to know that slavery is a great evil, a great wrong. But it was consented to by the founders of our Republic. It was provided for in the Constitution of our Union. A great portion of the property of the Southerners is invested under its sanction; and the business of the North, as well as the South, has become adjusted to it. There are millions upon millions of dollars due from Southerners to the merchants and mechanics of this city alone, the payment of which would be jeopardized by any rupture between the North and the South. We cannot afford, sir, to let you and your associates succeed in your endeavour to overthrow slavery. It is not a matter of principle with us. It is a matter of business necessity. We cannot afford to let you succeed. I have called you out to let you know, and to let your fellow-labourers know, that we do not mean to allow you to succeed. We mean, sir,' he said, with increased emphasis—'we mean, sir, to put you Abolitionists down—by fair means if we can, by foul means if we must.'[2]

1. Prominent among the manufacturers of Ephesus was 'a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana.' The small shrines which he and his fellow-craftsmen made were of various materials, from humble pottery to silver, and were intended for 'votaries to dedicate in the temple,' and represented the goddess Artemis sitting in a niche with her lions beside her. This man set himself at the head of a movement of protest. Gathering the members of the allied trades together, he addressed them in a speech in which the religious and the secular objections to the new religion were adroitly blended. Alarm for their trade was combined with zeal for their goddess and pride in their city. No doubt Demetrius was a devout worshipper of Artemis, and thought himself influenced by high motives in stirring up the craft. It is natural to be devout or moral or patriotic when it pays to

[1] Henry Drummond.

[1] W. M. Ramsay, *St Paul, the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, 277.

[2] H. E. Fosdick, *The Meaning of Service*, 185.

be so. One would not expect a shrine-maker to be easily accessible to the conviction that 'they be no gods which are made with hands.'

¶ We can have no truck with that abominable hypocrisy by which people who want to make money out of the weakness of others defend themselves on the ground that they are providing spiritual gymnasiums for the exercise of the muscles of self-control. The benevolent brewer, who protects his dividends with the Pecksniffian plea that it is bad for the people's souls to interfere with the liberty of the subject and restrict the opportunities of drink, we must estimate at his true worth; which is that of all liars, conscious or unconscious.[1]

Let us be very sure what it is that we ourselves are seeking in the vehement service of any principle. Is it a victory for right and justice, or a personal and profitable triumph? It is safest to be on the difficult side, to be battling for an interest whose prosperity will bring us no outward gain. But even then we are not secure. Selfishness is always taking fresh and subtle shapes. It may even be found among those prepared to make great ventures and sacrifices for God and goodness. A master of the spiritual life has said, 'Men would rather die with Christ in agonies than die to their own honour and be swathed with Him in the cradle.' There is no harder thing, even for those who have willingly made lifelong election of great and exacting causes, than to bring them the service of a surrendered heart.

2. A various reading of verse 28 gives an additional particular, which is of course implied in the received text, but makes the narrative more complete and vivid if inserted. It adds that the craftsmen rushed 'into the street,' and there raised their wild cry, which naturally 'filled' the city with confusion. So the howling mob, growing larger and more excited every minute, swept through Ephesus, and made for the theatre, the common place of assembly. On their road they seem to have come across two of Paul's companions, whom they dragged with them. What they meant to do with the two they had probably not asked themselves. A mob has no plans, and its most savage acts are unpremeditated. Passion let loose is almost sure to end in bloodshed, and the lives of Gaius and Aristarchus hung by a thread.

[1] G. A. Studdert Kennedy.

What a noble contrast to the raging crowd the silent submission, no doubt accompanied by trustful looks to Heaven and unspoken prayers, presents! And how grandly Paul comes out! He had not been found, probably had not been sought for, by the rioters, whose rage was too blind to search for him, but his brave soul could not bear to leave his friends in peril and not plant himself by their sides. So he 'was minded to enter in unto the people,' well knowing that there he had to face more ferocious 'wild beasts' than if a cageful of lions had been loosed on him. Faith in God and fellowship with Christ lift a soul above fear of death. The noblest kind of courage is not that born of flesh or temperament, or of the madness of battle, but that which springs from calm trust in and absolute surrender to Christ.

¶ Sir W. H. Russell, the war correspondent, tells this characteristic story of General Gordon: During the Crimean War there was a sortie, and the Russians actually reached the English trench. Gordon stood on the parapet, in great danger of his life, with nothing save his stick in his hand, encouraging the soldiers to drive out the enemy.

'Gordon,' they cried, 'come down.'

But he took no notice, whereupon a soldier who was near said to his comrade:

'It's all right; 'e don't mind being killed. 'E's one of those blessed Christians.'[1]

3. The scene in the theatre, to which Luke returns in verse 32, is described with a touch of scorn for the crowd, who mostly knew not what had brought them together. One section of it kept characteristically cool and sharp-eyed for their own advantage. A number of Jews had mingled in it, probably intending to fan the flame against the Christians, if they could do it safely. As in so many other cases in Acts, common hatred brought Jew and Gentile together, each pocketing for the time his disgust with the other. The Jews saw their opportunity. Half a dozen cool heads, who know what they want, can often sway a mob as they will. Alexander, whom they 'put forward,' was no doubt going to make a speech disclaiming for the Jews settled in Ephesus any connection with the obnoxious Paul. We may be very sure that his 'defence' was of the former, not of the latter.

[1] J. Burns.

But the rioters were in no mood to listen to fine distinctions among the members of a race which they hated so heartily. Paul was a Jew, and this man was a Jew; that was enough. So the roar went up again to Great Diana, and for two long hours the crowd surged and shouted themselves hoarse, Gaius and Aristarchus standing silent all the while and expecting every moment to be their last. The whole scene is a lively example of what must always happen when excited crowds are ignorantly stirred by appeals to prejudice or self-interest.

¶ 'Of all things,' wrote Burke, 'wisdom is the most terrified with epidemical fanaticism, because of all enemies it is that against which she is the least able to furnish any kind of resource.' [1]

The more democratic the form of government under which we live, the more needful is it to distinguish the voice of the people from the voice of the mob, and to beware of exciting, or being governed by, clamour, however loud and long.

Eutychus

Acts xx. 9.—'And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep.'

Troas, where this incident took place, was a city on the coast of Asia Minor. Romans had always cherished a warm feeling towards it because of their Trojan origin, a legend in which they had come to believe thoroughly. In fact, owing to its greatness and its legendary connection with the foundation of Rome, Julius Cæsar had actually entertained the idea of transferring thither the centre of government from Rome. It was of considerable commercial importance, as the port was the chief means of communication between Europe and Asia.

But for us the chief interest lies neither in the splendour of the town, with its granite temples and massive gymnasium, nor in the loveliness of its groves and hills and the gleam of the blue sea, nor again in the archaic and poetic associations of the neighbourhood; but in a certain room on the third storey of a house, not, we may be sure, in the fashionable quarters of the town. The place was hot, close, and stuffy. The oil-lamps made the atmosphere oppressive, the small Eastern windows were not good for ventilation, and fresh air was scanty. And the room was filled with a crowd of quite ordinary people, in their workaday clothes, who had come there, according to their weekly custom, to worship the God who had lately been made known to them as their Father; to partake, in comradeship, of a common meal, and to commemorate the death of one Jesus, whom they believed to be alive, victorious over death and sorrow and sin.

1. The gathering was somewhat larger than usual, because it hoped to see and hear again him through whom the glad tidings of God had been made known to them. There was one there who had been almost too tired after the busy labours of the day to come. But he had come, he was not going to miss it. He was a young slave, as we know from his name. He had, doubtless, been to the early morning gathering, where he had joined in the common prayer, had given his mite for the relief of the poorer and more destitute brethren, had heard the exhortation, and had joined in the prayers and praises and in breaking of bread. Then he had gone to his day's labour as a slave. And now when he was once more free he had come again. There he sat on the broad sill of one of the open windows. The hour was late, the discourse unusually long, for Paul continued speaking till midnight.

¶ It is said that in his early days as rector of Brightstone in the Isle of Wight, Bishop Samuel Wilberforce was noted for the length of his preaching. A parishioner has said that he would sometimes go on preaching at evening service till it grew 'dark, so that you could not see him'; but, it is added, 'the people would have sat all night listening.'

Paul probably dealt with topics that were beyond the comprehension of Eutychus, who, worn out with his work, fell fast asleep. We may smile and make cheap jokes, but the point of the story for us is not that Eutychus slept, but that Eutychus was there. The sleepiness of Eutychus puts many a wakeful man and woman to shame.

¶ In her church work Mary continued to find the little distraction from toil which gave life its savour. She began to attend the Sabbath Morning Fellowship and week-night prayer

[1] *Works*, iii. 435.

meetings. Despite the weary hours in the factory, and a long walk to and from the church, she was never absent from any of the services or meetings. 'We would as soon have thought of going to the moon as of being absent from a service,' she wrote shortly before she died. 'And we throve very well on it too. How often, when lying awake at night, my time for thinking, do I go back to those wonderful days!'[1]

Great obscurity hangs over the observance of the Lord's Day in the first century. All that we know is that, from the Resurrection onwards, the first day of the week was signalized by special Christian gatherings for religious purposes; and we do know, from the indisputable evidence of Pliny, that some fifty years later than this, in the neighbouring province of Bithynia, such an observance of the Lord's Day as we have suggested was the fact—an assembly early in the morning, before dawn, to sing and pray, and late in the evening, to partake of the Love Feast of the Lord's Supper. The choice of these hours was dictated by necessity. In those early days for the majority of the Christian converts, who held subordinate positions and were not their own masters, the Lord's Day must have been, not a day of rest, but a day of work, yet it was made also a day of worship. If the body had to be given to man, the soul was given to God. Now it is a day of rest—is it also a day of worship?

The comparison has only to be suggested and the contrast is plain. It is obvious that what the necessities of *work* in the first century could not do, namely, override the greater necessities of worship—the exigences of *rest* in the twentieth century are threatening to do. Nay more, rest, never more needful and salutary than it is now, is being driven out by what we call pleasure, but which is frequently not the recreation but the dissipation of our energies, physical, intellectual, and spiritual.

¶ The Divine conception of rest is *refreshment*. Of God, it is said: 'In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.' The rest which does not refresh is not the Sunday rest. Yet thousands of tired weekday workers work so hard on Sunday, rushing from place to place, tearing from one amusement to another, that they begin work on Monday morning far more fagged than they left it on Saturday midday. They certainly have not rested and been *refreshed*. Quite apart from churchgoing, they have not kept Sunday.[1]

2. Primitive worship was, as to externals, poor, bare, uncomfortable; without any subsidiary aids to devotion; an ordinary, secular chamber for its church. Yet the gathering is alive with the magnetic vitality of the speaker; it is moved and cheered by the consciousness of the Divine presence. It is a picture for admiration and imitation, not with servile literalness but in spirit and in ideal truth. It is useless to reproduce the externals without the invisible presence and power which transfigured them. The reasonable explanation of the simplicity of primitive worship is the necessity of it. When more stately surroundings became possible, there was no reluctance to take advantage of them. Our Lord attended the services of the Temple, with all its gorgeous ritual. He foretold its downfall because the spirit of worship had left it. For it was not the stateliness of the building but the irreverence of the worshippers that had transformed the house of prayer into a den of thieves. He enunciated the ultimate principle by which all worship should be tested. Not in Jerusalem amidst the pomp of orthodoxy, nor in half heretic Samaria with its maimed rites, but in either or in neither, if only in the heart of the worshipper there abide the spirit of the truth by which alone men approach the Father. It is the determination of the will towards God in repentance and resolve, in love, hope, faith, in which worship alone consists—all else is but its garment.

¶ The true worship is not the prostration of the body in kneeling, nor even the prostration of the soul in distant adoration, but the yielding of our living powers willingly and gladly to the Divine influence within us. There is an expression of the great Stoic emperor, Marcus Aurelius, who perhaps came nearer than any other non-Christian of the West to the Christian life and spirit: 'I reverence the God who is within.' That God has been fully made known to us in Jesus Christ, and we can give a grander significance to this expression. Our God is within us. Let us allow our thoughts to be enlightened and our energies quickened by the spirit of holiness—the unseen, constraining

[1] W. P. Livingstone, *Mary Slessor of Calabar*, 7.

[1] E. E. Holmes, *The Days of the Week*, 12.

power of righteousness—and we are practising the true worship.[1]

Our art may build its Holy Place,
Our feet on Sinai stand,
But Holiest of Holies knows
No tread, no touch of hand;
The listening soul makes Sinai still
Wherever we may be,
And in the vow, 'Thy will be done!'
Lies all Gethsemane.[2]

3. The first century rather than the thirteenth was the age of faith, when men had learnt to be martyrs, but had not learnt to persecute, not, as we are sometimes inclined to think, because of the brevity but because of the purity of its creed, because its faith was before all things the faith of the heart. It was no easier, as we are sometimes tempted to think, because it was apparently so simple. In its simplest form, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,' it involved profound mysteries and surpassed the reach of human reason. It suggested questions which had to be asked, and which demanded answers.

What is belief? Why is Jesus 'Lord'? What is it to be saved? How can and does Jesus save? These questions are to the satisfaction of simple minds sufficiently answered within the Bible itself. When, however, Christianity was no longer confined to the lowly circle of peasants and slaves, but came in contact with the active, inquiring minds of Rome and Greece, further questions, the answers to which would set this new religion in a right relation with the current theories and the obvious facts of life, suggested themselves and demanded explanation. The early theology of the Christian Church was the answer to the demand. The doctrines were not independent inventions of the intellect or the imagination, but the attempt to set down in words—words which, as all acknowledge, could never adequately explain or entirely represent these transcendent truths—the solutions of these high and heavenly problems.

Take one example — the doctrine of the Trinity. It is a theory—by calling it a theory we do not mean it is 'only a theory'—which has been adopted to explain the facts of the nature of the Divine Being as those facts are revealed to us in the ideas of God, as Father, as Son, as Spirit. The facts necessitated the theory, the theory did not produce the facts. Men did not first conceive a theory of the Divine Being as a Trinity and deduce from that theory the fact of the Divinity of Christ and the fact of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, they were confronted with the fact of the unique life of Jesus Christ, and the fact of the operation of the Holy Spirit in human life. These facts called for explanation, and the explanation which alone accounted for them involved an idea of God as incarnate in Jesus Christ, and as immanent in human life in the work of the Spirit. All theological doctrines are attempts to write out in the language of the time the experiences of the soul and its conscious relationship to God.

No, we shall not deepen our faith by getting rid of doctrine. But we do need the interpretation of Christian doctrine in the terms and idioms of our own time and our own methods of thought. Dogma is the past expression of thought, and must be translated into the idiom of the present if the faith it once expressed is to remain a living force in the thought of mankind.

¶ Doctrines and modes of thought are like coins; they grow quickly blurred, dim, indecipherable, have to be called in; and new ones must be issued fresh and readable from the mint. It is *your* way of looking at Christ that will make Him visible and real to your own generation. For the herd instinct is a fact, others are dimly feeling what you feel; and you must be their mouth to state it for them, to make intelligible to them what their minds are groping after.[1]

We cannot reproduce the form of the primitive worship; we need to interpret some of its language, but the spirit and the truth is forever permanent. Worship is the realization of the abiding presence of Christ, Faith the appropriation of that presence to the needs and hopes of our souls. Though the language in which we may express it varies, our need is one and the same with those worshippers at Troas. And its satisfaction is one and the same, unalterable in its Divine efficiency, 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'

[1] Dean Fremantle, *The Gospel of the Secular Life*, 209.
[2] William C. Gannett.

[1] A. J. Gossip, *In Christ's Stead*, 124.

The Essentials of Preaching

Acts xx. 20, 21.—'How that I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ' (R.V.).

The Apostle here proclaims his idea of what preaching is meant to be. What is it that counts? What *must* be taught though much besides be left unspoken in a world where every one has his allotted time and no more? St Paul's summary of the essentials of Christian teaching, on its human side, is repentance and faith.

From the Book of the Acts we gather that his practice answered to this rule, for, whatever his audience, he seems always, first or last, to have come back to these two themes. At Lystra to simple and superstitious people, at Athens among the sophists, and before Agrippa the king, we find him speaking of repentance and turning to God, as if it so engaged his mind as instinctively to rise to his lips. He professes that he dwelt on this theme 'both publicly and from house to house,' which also is significant; for arguments and appeals which serve where crowds assemble may be woefully out of place in face of the conditions of the individual life—its urgent pains and joys and fears. 'If I had to counsel a young preacher,' says Emerson, 'I should say that where there is any difference felt between the footboard of the pulpit and the floor of the parlour, you have not said what you ought'; but of such a test Paul could have no dread.

To describe his own bearing he employs a word with a faintly nautical flavour, for 'I shrank not' may mean—I did not lower my sails. Though the wind were out, and actual danger threatened, I did not turn aside, since I knew the port for which I was making.

It is good for us to feel that we are in the line of the great tradition. Let us, too, exalt these essential things.

1. *The Morality of Preaching.*—Apart from any particular doctrinal form, and even outside the Christian faith, there has always been in preaching a call to a nobler life. 'I see better things and approve them, but I follow the baser:' that pagan confession already tells of the cleavage which exists in the general heart of man, and at which it is the preacher's business to strike. 'We come to church properly for self-examination,' says Emerson again, 'to see how it stands with us'; and when we thus measure ourselves not by the easy standards of our fellows, but by the law and the thought of God, it needs no magic of eloquence to convince us of our need of repentance. The man that I am looks mournfully across at the man I might have been. No doubt there are people who seem to be inaccessible to such appeals, and yet experience forbids us to say of any one that the impulse is wholly dead. It may betray no sign of activity, and yet, out of sight, it waits; and when the fostering powers of the Spirit, like earth's moisture and warmth, strike through, then growth at once sets in. That marks the human opportunity of preaching—by appealing to what is great in man to give the buried seed a chance to grow. Preaching that is trivial in its subject and rhetorical and declamatory in its tone, is common; but such work cannot possibly have much moral value.

¶ Writing of monastic religion Seton Merriman says, 'It is like a varnish which serves only to bring out the colour of the wood, and does not alter it by more than a shade. A man who is not straightforward may grow in monastic zeal, but he will never be straightforward.'

It is never an easy task to change character, and repentance must not be thought of as an incident which can be left behind, whilst men pass on to other interests. It may have to be renewed again and again, until it affects the very secrets of life. A Christian man, in old age, may still be making discoveries which render him ashamed of his complacent ease, and force him thus to attempt some new beginning, so that repentance keeps him company to the very verge of the heavenly kingdom. This might be abundantly illustrated from the lives of devout men, but perhaps an example taken from a different field of activity may make the lesson vivid. When Goethe first came to Rome, he was a young man, prosperous and flattered, and prepared quickly to assimilate all that the city had to offer. But after a few days he writes to a friend in a way that is full of promise: 'A man has really to be a learner here, if he is to get any good from his stay.' And later still in this intellectual process he writes again: 'Day by day I am casting off another and still another husk, but I hope to

come home to you a man.' That is one part of what repentance may mean; it is to make acquaintance with ourselves through a discovery of the world of powers and opportunities which lies about us; and it works itself out in Goethe's way by 'casting off another and still another husk' of prejudice and self-approval. Goethe hoped to come back to Weimar 'a man,' but our Master would have us travel farther yet in our repentance, and become as little children.

This is one chief aim of our preaching, says Paul, with its relentless morality—there are new lessons to learn, neglected faults to amend, fresh glories to discover.

2. *The Evangelism of Preaching.*—The morality of preaching must never be parted from its evangelism. The repentance preached by Paul was such as brings men to God, the faith was that which leads to the Lord Jesus Christ; there is a movement implied in both away from self and towards Another who can give a better self. True preaching in all ages has insisted upon repentance carried to its end and goal in God.

¶ In an essay on Robert Burns, Stopford Brooke makes a tremendous charge against the Ayrshire ministers of the eighteenth century, which may suggest the force of Paul's expression—'the repentance which leads to God.' 'The Christian ministers of Ayrshire had blotted out Christ for Burns, and threw him back unhelped upon himself.' 'Burns was always,' says Brooke, 'coming to himself like the Prodigal Son, and saying, "I will arise and go to my Father"; but he never got more than half-way—never in this world.' He was not told about the Father; so far as the preaching was concerned, the burden of his renovation was left upon himself. Sometimes he was sorry and ashamed, and he would have liked to start anew; but his repentance halted there, not leading him to God, and that was a fatal defect. 'For with Him alone is strength to *create* goodness in the worst and to make the weakest strong.'

Mere morality in preaching is not sufficient. Under its influence men may have seasons of remorse, and yet may never enter on the way of amendment, for they are conscious of something more persistent than their remorse. They feel the constraint of habit and the wavering of their own resolve. Their friends have come to expect of them a certain level of behaviour, and would laugh outright at the very notion of their becoming saints. They do wish for good—sometimes: they stretch their hands in desire for the other shore, but they cannot cross the stream. 'It is impossible,' says Seneca, 'for a man *of himself* to escape; it must be that some one stretch forth a hand and draw him out.' And that is where preaching becomes evangelism. It tells of a God who saves men, and who, in the gift of His Son, has declared what was ever in His heart. The Cross, as in one single incident, proclaims the unchanging purpose of God to redeem men even at His own cost. Redemption, as the true preacher speaks of it, is not a concern of the future; to all who listen it is declared that even now they may be free. If there were no forgiveness, repentance, however vehement, would be a fruitless thing. But once we have learned from the heart to say, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,' it is not difficult to continue, 'and I believe in the forgiveness of sins.' For such a God as Jesus has revealed cannot but forgive.

3. *The Universality of Preaching.*—It is addressed to every one—to Jews and also to Greeks, to those who fancy they have no need of salvation as well as to those whose need is clamorous. Since the distress and misery of men have no frontier the Kingdom of God's mercy must also have none. Since everywhere men are sinning, and everywhere judging and reproaching themselves, this message of repentance and faith can never lack an audience.

The first instinct of those who have always been well behaved is to regard the Church and what it stands for as a kind of monopoly: 'Salvation is of the Jews.' Many in Israel welcomed Jesus as a national deliverer, but they turned at once against Him when He claimed to be the Saviour of the world; and that narrow temper has not wholly disappeared. In every Church there are people without interest in Foreign Missions or in any story of the reclamation of drunkards and outcasts. The Church, as they conceive it, is a coterie of well-conducted people whose minds do not admit the idea of a God who cares as much for the worthless as for any one of them. But our message, says Paul, tells of an overflowing mercy which reaches

even to the uttermost. Perhaps it is the opposite temptation which threatens some of us most—the temptation to pass over to outsiders the more urgent evangelical appeals. They are ready to believe that such preaching may be very useful amongst the ignorant and reckless, but scarcely that it applies to themselves.

¶ The Duchess of Buckingham, in a letter which she wrote to the Countess of Huntingdon, said: 'I thank your Ladyship for the information concerning the Methodist preachers; their doctrines are most repulsive and strongly tinctured with impertinence and disrespect towards their superiors. . . . It is monstrous to be told you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting, and I cannot but wonder that your Ladyship should relish any sentiments so much at variance with high rank and good breeding.'

But the elder son who has stayed at home, growing hard and narrow, needs to hear of these central matters just as much as the prodigal, and repentance is a practical concern for them both. People who are perfectly satisfied with themselves may need not less than others to be brought to these three tremendous spots—to Sinai, where God declares the law, which even the best of us has broken; to Calvary, where the Son of God died for our mean sins; and to the Great White Throne, where all the work of every life must finally be tried. Our self-complacency is deeply rooted if it does not wither in presence of these burning realities of God. These are the things that humble, these are the things that heal.

The Blessing of Uncertainty

Acts xx. 22-24.—'And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me.'

How often there are occasions when we have a craving for certainty in regions of our life that are beyond our knowledge and control. Where it is at its best, this craving for certainty is simply a devout and humble entreaty towards God, for the most part unexpressed in words, that by some means the world of spiritual realities might become clearer to us, less ambiguous, surer. And yet when we sit down in front of ourselves and think the matter out we perceive that the whole business of the soul would be deranged by such an interference on the part of God. We should no longer be able to say, 'This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith.' We should have the right to use only a much poorer kind of speech, and to say, 'This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our knowledge, our sight.' Our hearts later on would condemn us that we had become afraid, or impatient, or had lost our confidence in the perfect trustworthiness of the Lord of our Faith. We cried out for signs, for proofs, for payment in advance; and sadly He had given these things to us, perceiving that we were children and not men. And then, we would remember our Lord's words to St Thomas: 'Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.' We should recall those words, and they would make us miserable and angry at our impatience; for we should see that by our demand for certainty we had removed ourselves from the scope and dignity of our Lord's last Beatitude.

O Saviour, feeble flesh cries out
For something which with sense agrees;
Still it renews the Apostle's doubt,
Because it handles not, nor sees;
Forgetting what a boon receives
He who, though seeing not, believes.[1]

What we ought to be asking from God if we are true followers of Christ, is, *not certainty, but certitude.* Certainty is a mood of the soul founded largely upon outward signs, or considerations of reason; but certitude is a mood of the soul which rests upon nothing less than the very nature of God—as just, as holy, as loving, as the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Certainty is a mood which is encouraged by events. Certitude is a mood which is secured and confirmed by communion with the Eternal Spirit to whom we at the beginning committed ourselves. Certainty we may never have here in this world. Certitude we may have, indeed we must and ought to have. Certainty desires to be sure of the end. Certitude is satisfied if it can be sure that

[1] Lord Kinloch.

the beginning was right, and if step by step we can lift up our hearts through Christ to God. Thus certitude is a state of the soul which we would all do well to seek.

There is a powerful poem by Robert Buchanan in *The Book of Orm*, which is entitled 'The Lifting of the Veil.' There the poet describes what happened when the veil was lifted, and human beings were able to see God with the naked eye, as we see one another.

My Soul had a vision,
And in my Soul's vision
The Veil was lifted
And the Face was there!

This let me whisper;
It stirred not, changed not,
Though the world stood still, amazed:
But the Eyes within it,
Like the eyes of a painted picture,
Met and followed
The eyes of each that gazed.

Whereupon we are bidden by the poet to observe what happened in a world in which the thing which we in our weak hours pray for is granted, and men see God not by faith but by sight, and are made sure of the world of spiritual realities not by the peace which descends upon unworldly souls, but by a kind of physical contact. And what, according to the poet, does happen? This happens: the world stands still. The whole activity of man, body, soul, spirit, is paralysed—paralysed by certainty.

The heart of the City
Stood silently;
How could they barter,
How could they traffic
With the terrible Eyes to see?
Nay! each man brooded
On the Face alone;
Each soul was an eyeball,
Each shape was a stone;
And I saw the faces,
And some were glad,
And some were pensive,
And some were mad;
But in all places—
Hall, street, and lane—
'Twas a frozen pleasure,
A frozen pain.
The heart of the World
Had no pulsation—
'Twas a piteous Sabbath
Everywhere.

The fact is, uncertainty is one of the fundamental conditions of human life, and that is true here which is true everywhere, that if one fundamental condition of life were changed, it would involve changes everywhere, and would annihilate the human soul itself. An absolute certainty in any region of our life would paralyse the activities of the soul, first in that very region, and afterwards throughout.

Then let us take another step. For us the greatest exponent of the world of unseen realities is Jesus Christ, whose name and life and laws and revelation we have in the books and institutions of the Christian Church. Now, supposing that we are brought into a situation of such a kind that the voice of Christ asks us to do something, or to believe something, or to hold on to something; and on the other side, the force of events or the immediate aspect of things suggests that we should take another course. On our decision there and then, we make plain to ourselves whether we are followers of Christ in the facing of life's tasks and mysteries. This is what makes life great, and makes man the child of God, that he may assume a task, or endure a season of contradiction, and bear up under what we may call, without rebelliousness, the Silence of Heaven, 'never doubting clouds will break.'

Let us recall our Lord's last words to His disciples when He turned the conversation to His own near departure, preparing them for living in a world much more dark and lonely than it had been. 'Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know'; so He said, as it were, casually. But just there Thomas said something which we have all said at some time or wanted to say: 'Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?' It is as though he had said: 'Lord, if we could but be sure, sure beyond the quiver of a doubt, that the heaven of our dreams and of our love awaits us, why, that would wipe the tears from off all faces.' To which Jesus answered, in effect: 'The *end* you cannot know, because it is at the end. The *way* you know, for it begins here and now. But does not a way imply an

end? Is it not the case that, every time you plant your feet firmly upon the way and take a step, you know it is a step towards something, towards that very thing which at your best you chose? Well, that is faith, to hold, as a thing beyond debate or fear, that *the end is as sure as the way.*'

A little later, when Jesus spoke of the 'Father,' once again a disciple interrupted Him, and once again that disciple spoke for all of us. 'Shew us the Father,' said Philip, 'and it sufficeth us.' Is it not as though he had used our very language, and had uttered what is our very thought in many an embarrassed hour?—'True, Lord, all is well if we are in the hands of one whom we may call Father. For a Father means love, means sense, means purpose and order and the establishment of His Will. But how can we be sure?' To which Jesus replied: 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' It is as though He had said: 'It may be there is no sign such as will ever coerce the will and overthrow the very possibility of misgiving. But you have seen Me. You do not doubt that the love which I bear you is Real. Here is My love. And death is not going to quench it. Death is coming to Me because of My love for you; and love in Me is going to triumph over death.'

To put this whole matter in another light: 'Faith,' as the writer to the Hebrews put it, 'is the giving substance to things hoped for; it is a conviction concerning that which is not seen.' Faith, that is to say, is loyalty. And all his illustrations in that great chapter, the eleventh, have this feature in common: every man of them said his say, struck his blow, gave his life for the sake of something which he never saw, but concerning which he was sure. There is a proverb that 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.' About that proverb there is only one thing to be said; and that is that it is not true. In fact, it is a short and handy formula for the sin against the Holy Ghost. For when you grasp a bird, it ceases to sing. It is only the uncaptured things which stir the soul. It is only the things about which we may say that we have them, and yet have them not; it is only the unfulfilled, the uncompleted things, the hazardous and threatened things, the things which die daily according to the flesh that they may be born again according to the spirit; it is they and they only which have been our songs in the night, the martial music of humanity, rousing us and sustaining us to confront the unknown with an unconquered heart.

¶ In Browning's *Fears and Scruples* we are told of one to whom a great love has come, but who has never seen him whom she loves. She has only letters from him. From time to time she hears also of his fine deeds. But that is all her heart has to go upon. And the point and passion of the poem is that it is enough.

Friends seek to sow suspicion in her soul. 'Perhaps the letters are not genuine. And as for his great deeds, it is only his account of them which you have; perhaps there is another story, and another side to his story.' But she gives way not by a hairbreadth!

Never mind! Though foolishness may flout me,
One thing's sure enough: 'tis neither frost,
No, nor fire, shall freeze or burn from out me
Thanks for truth—though falsehood, gained—
though lost.

All my days, I'll go the softlier, sadlier,
For that dream's sake! How forget the thrill
Through and through me as I thought 'The
gladlier
Lives my friend because I love him still!'

The poet himself tells us that all the time he is thinking not of any human affection, but of the fidelity of the soul to that loving God who in Christ did for us what He did, and left behind for our guidance and for the uplifting of our hearts—what He has left behind.[1]

Bound in the Spirit

Acts xx. 22-24.—'And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me.'

St Paul is a splendid example of a man who was under the power of a controlling principle. His life was full of a purpose governed by an unswerving faithfulness to his highest convictions. He appears in this narrative as a man who feels—This is the one course for me,

[1] John A. Hutton.

therefore I must follow it. I go bound in the Spirit. To him the path of duty seemed very clear, and whatever the consequences might be, he knew that to follow any other path was for him impossible, because wilfully contradictory to the voice of God.

To be able to give events their due importance, and, amidst them all, never to lose sight of the grand end of life, is indeed an enviable power. We get lost amongst the accessories of life, get bewildered amongst separate events, amongst solitary occurrences, and by so doing exalt these out of their due place in relation to the one aim of life.

1. There had been a famine in Judæa, and the churches were reduced to great straits. An appeal for help to the Gentile converts outside the province had not been made in vain. Contributions had been liberally given, and the task of conveying the money to Jerusalem—the headquarters of the churches of Judæa—had been entrusted to Paul. There was one reason why Paul might have hesitated to undertake this journey. He was not ignorant of the active hostility of the unfriendly Jews, but he was persuaded that it was his duty to carry these contributions of the Gentile Christians to their Christian brethren in Judæa, and he was persuaded that God had called him to go to Jerusalem.

Had Paul's conviction of necessity been anything but immovable, it would certainly have been shaken by the incidents he met with on his way. It seemed as if at every stage of his journey some fresh obstacle barred the way to Jerusalem.

To begin with, at Miletus he had to say farewell to many whom he loved. That is always a hard thing to do, and Paul felt it so when he knelt with them on the sea beach and committed the elders of his flock to the care of the great Shepherd of the sheep, ere he sailed away to see their face no more. Fain would he have stayed, but he was bound in the Spirit on a journey.

We have witnessed such scenes since then. We have seen the missionaries of the Cross say farewell to all those they loved best, and go forth alone at the call of the Master to far distant lands, not knowing the things that were to befall them, or if again in this world they might set eyes on those they left.

¶ When W. C. Burns set out for China in 1846, his mother found it so hard to part with him that, after walking some distance with him from the old homestead, she seemed unable to endure any longer the intensity of her emotion, and giving him a vigorous push, said: 'There, noo, I've gi'en thee to the Lord! Go!' It is that kind of thing that makes the departure so hard.[1]

We have seen other and longer farewells. We have knelt while still on the solid beach of life, and seen those we loved launch out on the great eternal sea, and sail away into the darkness, and the world seems lone and empty because they are gone from us. Yet the sorrow of a great loss is to be no hindrance in our Christian course. Wherever Christ calls us we must be willing to follow Him, even though He lead us by strange paths.

Past this, and the temptation to linger on the way, Paul sails to Tyre, and here again a new hindrance presents itself. Certain disciples said to him through the Spirit that he should not set foot in Jerusalem. Did it not seem as if God had brought him to Tyre only to make him see that he must abandon his purpose? Which voice was he to obey, the voice of his own convictions, or the voice of these disciples? For Paul there could be only one way. He was 'bound in the spirit' to go to Jerusalem. He could not be false to this conviction, for then he would be false to his conscience, and so false to God. Therefore that hindrance too must be put aside. How true to experience this is! The world is full of contradictory voices calling us in different directions, and we scarce know which to obey. We have been perplexed perhaps about questions of duty and conduct. We have found ourselves anxiously inquiring what course we should follow. One friend counsels one way, another suggests a different course. Which are we to follow? We have been in difficulty about some point of Christian doctrine, and we turn round to look for an answer from those who are accounted skilled in answering, and we are met by a score of voices each crying louder than another that his is the right way. The voices of good and evil call to us. Pleasure holds out her alluring promises, while duty, less inviting, stands silently before her. The unhappy man who in the midst of all this din of contradiction has no controlling principle to keep him right

[1] F. W. Boreham, *Mountains in the Mist*, 82.

will be like a rudderless boat at the mercy of every wave. Were we to listen to the sound of every wind that blows and alter our course to suit it, were we to listen even to half the good advice we get from kind, well-meaning friends, our course through life would be a wavering, crooked, trembling path. We must grasp life for ourselves, we must find its purpose, we must get one meaning out of it. So only can our path be straight.

Bravely independent, Paul passes on his way, and, still unshaken in his resolution, he arrives at Cæsarea. There 'a certain prophet, named Agabus, taking Paul's girdle, bound his own feet and hands, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle; . . . and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.' This was a Divine intimation of danger, and no one could have blamed the Apostle had he abandoned his project and gone no farther. Conscience is

> The boon companion, who her strong breast-plate
> Buckles on him, that feels no guilt within
> And bids him on and fear not.

We have here a fine example of a man going straight on under the overmastering impulse of the right. The Apostle's life reminds one of a Roman road. It suffered nothing to stop it. Roman soldiers never knew what it was to be stopped on the line of march by any obstacle in the way. If they came to a mountain, they went over it; to a river, they forded it or bridged it; to a forest, they cut their way through it; to an enemy's camp, they stormed it. Paul was a Jew, but he was a Roman citizen, and he had a Roman tenacity of purpose that allowed no obstacle to stand between him and the goal he wished to reach.

¶ St Paul's words recall those of Luther on his journey to Augsburg in October 1518. He, too, had received solemn warnings that his life was in danger, and he knew that they were well founded. Yet in a letter written to his Wittenberg friends he says: 'I have met some men who are so timorous in my cause, that they have tried to tempt me not to proceed to Augsburg. But I remain fixed. God's will be done. Even at Augsburg, even in the midst of His enemies, Jesus Christ reigns. Let Christ live, let Martin and every sinner perish, as it is written, Let the God of my salvation be exalted.'

2. This element is not the only one that enters into Paul's journey. He was able not only to overcome all obstacles, but he went to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that should befall him there.

We trace all the way we have come, and store up our experiences to guide our steps on the way we have yet to tread, but the future is a mystery. We peer into the darkness and fain would penetrate its gloom, but our dim eyes see nothing of that which it hides from us. We can only range ourselves behind the Light of our life and pray:

> Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
> Lead Thou me on;
> The night is dark, and I am far from home;
> Lead Thou me on.
> Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
> The distant scene,—one step enough for me.

What the coming days may have in store for us we cannot tell. We know not the things that may befall us, but Christ our Captain knows, and is not that enough for the soldier? God our Father knows, and is not that enough for the child?

¶ Writing to a friend, at the close of 1917, Jowett says: What will the New Year bring to the world? And to you and me? What a mercy 'our eyes are holden' so that we have the privilege of walking by faith and not by sight! For if we saw something very attractive ahead, we should spoil our present work in our impatience to reach it. And if we saw something unpleasant ahead, we should spoil to-day in our fear of to-morrow. So the New Year is in God's scroll, and we are in God's hands. And that is the best every way![1]

And yet Paul was not altogether ignorant of what awaited him. He did know that 'bonds and afflictions abide me.' The two positions are not contradictory: we know not, and yet we know. We know not what is to befall us, but we know that life has never yet been all plain sailing; we may look for storm and tempest. To that extent we know the future. Both his ignorance and his knowledge, then, made it

[1] A. Porritt, *John Henry Jowett*, 185.

hard for him to say, as he did say, 'None of these things move me.' In absolute devotion to God-enjoined duty there is power to give us a 'solemn scorn of ills,' and to lift us clear over every stumbling-block that cumbers the course and every enemy that would contest our progress. If a man has yielded himself fully to that great conception of God's will as impelling him along a God-prescribed path, it is neither in sorrow nor in joy to arrest his steps.

¶ In no man of our day, perhaps, has the sense of being in the hands of Another been so strong and steadfast as in General Gordon. His favourite text was :

'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,
And lean not upon thine own understanding :
In all thy ways acknowledge him,
And he shall direct thy paths.'

It was in the spirit of these words that he accepted the Soudan. 'I go up alone,' he said, on the eve of his departure, 'with an infinite Almighty God to direct and guide me, and am glad to so trust Him as to fear nothing, and indeed to feel sure of success.' 'I have set my face to the work, and will give my life to it. . . . God must undertake the work, and I am for the moment used as His instrument. . . . I think how many would be weighed down by this immense charge ; how they would shrink from accepting it without some other help, for fear of their reputation. But for me, I never gave the question a thought. I feel sure of success ; for I do not lean on my own understanding, and He directs my path.'

The bondage of the Spirit is the strong motive power that leads a man right on through all experiences. Are we subjecting ourselves to this bondage ? Men put themselves in subjection under the money-power, under the world-power, under the self-power. These all promise liberty, but the promise is not fulfilled. The service of Christ leads to lordship, the servant gains dominion over self and all the world-power, but the imaginary freedom of self-indulgence leads to bitterest bondage. Man was never ruled by a more ruthless tyrant than himself when, in claiming freedom, he suffered his lower nature to become the master of his higher. It is the bondage of the Spirit that is liberty.

The Pauline Road

Acts xx. 23, 24.—'The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.'

The Apostle Paul is always on the hard road, and he is always confronted by a thousand antagonisms. 'Bonds and imprisonments await me,' and they were by no means unfamiliar experiences. We shall seek in vain along this man's road for green pastures and still waters and quiet nooks filled with soft fragrance. J. H. Jowett says, 'If I wish to image to my own mind the character of his journeyings, I recall to myself a bit of strangely rugged and uncertain country just beyond the Alpine village of Engelberg, where you are guided in your goings by red dashes of paint splashed against the out-jutting rocks of the countryside. You are guided by a red line. And the Pauline road is a red road. You move from place to place guided by the crimson marks of pain and sacrifice.' Assaulted at Iconium, stoned at Lystra, beaten and imprisoned at Philippi ; often in fastings and hunger and thirst—red dashes of pain and sacrifice all the way to Rome. And then, to add to the wonder of it, we are told that this very much oppressed Apostle of the Lord had a body which was heavily weighted with physical infirmity. At one time he refers to it as a thorn in the flesh, the deep root of constant and abiding pain ; at another as an earthen vessel, easily chipped, easily shivered and broken ; and again, borrowing an image from his own trade, as a light tent, so very fragile the structure that even the slightest movement of the wind can carry it away. And yet this sick man, so afflicted and so exposed, trudged about for a whole generation as the ambassador of redeeming grace. And now at the dawn of a second generation he is still on the same hard road and possessed by the spirit of the same dauntless courage — 'knowing nothing of the things which shall befall me, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city that bonds and imprisonments await me.' That is to say, the red line of sacrificial and painful experience is to be his to the very end of the way.

How did the Apostle face these multiplied

antagonisms? What had he at the back of him? Or rather, what had he at the heart of him?

1. He had behind him and within him the energizing secret of a tremendous experience. Something happened to him on the way to Damascus which transformed his entire life. He refers to it again and again with changing imagery and expression. What happened on the road? He says, 'I was apprehended by Christ Jesus.' It is a singularly vivid, full-coloured, and picturesque word. It is used elsewhere in the New Testament of the overtaking of a traveller by a robber on a lonely road. 'I was apprehended.' The hands of the Lord Jesus fell upon this man suddenly, as the hands of a robber would fall upon a traveller. He was gripped with the seizure of complete possession. On the way to Damascus this man was overtaken by Jesus, and from that very startling moment Jesus never let him go. There is another sentence in which he describes this momentous experience. He says of the Lord Jesus, 'He was seen of me also.' Our English word does not bring out quite the fullness of the original word. It means the wide-open eyes of a child. It means the contemplation of an overwhelming surprise. In another place he adds, 'Have I not seen the Lord Jesus?' But that is another word. It is a very intimate word. It suggests a clear discernment, as though the Lord were coming nearer to his humble door. He saw Him, in the first place, as a surprising presence far away. Now he sees Him just at the door with His hand upon the latch. And again: 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' The latch has been lifted, and the Lord is now within. The man's life has now become the temple of the Lord's indwelling presence. 'For to me to live is Christ.' His individuality is not suppressed, only possessed and enthused.

¶ According to Paul's own deepest, most deliberate, most systematic teaching, it is the life of Christ, the living Christ, energizing even now within the faithful soul, that constitutes both the primary source and the ultimate motive of Christian sanctity.[1]

All these things happened on the way to Damascus, and it was with the great secret in his soul, glowing in his deepest life, that this man breasted the difficulties of the crowded road.

[1] Von Hügel.

2. He met his antagonisms in the profound consciousness of an immeasurable obligation. This man had been made free, and now he felt that his very freedom bound him again to the One who had delivered him. He had been led into the riches of grace, and now he longed that every child of God should share the same glorious estate. His spiritual riches made him the debtor of everybody who was spiritually poor. He was always trying to give away what the Lord had given to him, and he could never overtake and discharge the debt. The more he gave away the more he had to give, until the very weight of the glory overburdened him with the sense of endless obligation. The man is ever boasting of his freedom. 'Necessity is laid upon me.' But that is not the obligation that is born of grievous bondage; it is the blessed necessity that is born of sovereign grace. This man is the bondslave of the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave him his freedom. That was the way the Apostle met every antagonism—knocked at every closed door, as free, and yet as bound; sharing the unsearchable riches of Christ, and yet in debt to everybody. Now, great lovers of that kind will not be turned aside just when thorns are found in the way, or when Apollyon straddles across the path, or when some door remains obstinately closed at which they have been hammering through the dark watches of a long and tedious night. The men who are moved by constraints of this kind do not turn aside when a lion appears in the path. Cried this heavily-indebted lover of the Lord, 'I set no value upon my life.' Such was the great mood with which this great Apostle trudged along his heavy road.

¶ The Divine, apprehended in and as the Eternal Christ, elicits in him (Sundar Singh) a passion and devotion not possible to the mystic, to whose imagination absolute Reality takes on a less vividly concrete and personal form. That is why he is a missionary, although his own natural bent would be towards the hermit's life of contemplation in solitary mountain caves. The love of Christ constrains him.[1]

Hearts I have won of sister or of brother,
Quick on the earth or hidden in the sod,
Lo every heart awaiteth me, another
Friend in the blameless family of God.

[1] Streeter and Appasamy, *The Sadhu*.

What was their sweet desire and subtle yearning,
Lovers, and ladies whom their song enrols ?
Faint to the flame which in my breast is burning,
Less than the love with which I ache for souls.[1]

3. What did the Apostle conceive to be his mission as he moved along the road ? His answer is, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. This man with the Damascus secret in his spirit and with a sense of indebtedness that no service could ever discharge, went anywhere and everywhere — crossing mountain roads, trudging through sultry plains, crossing stormy seas, that everywhere he might testify the gospel of the grace of God. And what did he mean by grace ?

¶ ' One of my congregation at Carrs Lane,' says Dr Jowett, ' went away into the Western States, and he wanted to send his minister some little idea of his enormous environment and the character of it. And I remember there came by post one morning a letter with just these words enclosed, " A sample of my environment," and it was just the feather of a bird, a lovely, indescribably beautiful feather of a tropical bird.'

Many preachers have felt, when trying to speak about the grace of the Lord Jesus, that they are still only at the beginning of a continent of the beauty and glory that are hidden in that most marvellous word.

What is Grace ? It is more than mercy. It is more than a multitude of tender mercies. It is more than love. Grace is holy love, but it is holy love in spontaneous movement going out in eager quest toward the unholy and the unlovely, that by the ministry of its own sacrifice it might redeem the unholy and the unlovely into its own strength and beauty. Here are one or two out of the numberless things which the Apostle says grace can do for us. He takes the guilt of the race and places it before us in all its appalling frown and menace, and when we are just overwhelmed by it he testifies to the gospel of the grace of God, and the guilt is dissolved, just as the ice and snow and the grip of the frost are loosened in the genial warmth of the spring. And then he looks round and he sees the discords of the race, our jealousies, our antipathies, and our hatreds, all our racial clashes and divisions, and when we are just appalled by the savage severity of the alienations, he testifies the grace of the Lord, which brings down what he calls ' the middle wall of partition ' and brings the scattered peoples into clear and vital union. He says also that the grace of God brings to the sorrowing the spirit of endurance. ' We are strengthened in the grace that is in the Lord Jesus.' He even says that grace can go into the very heart of sorrow, and in the very heart of sorrow can unseal the springs of praise. Do you remember his beautiful phrase, ' Singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord ' ?

That is how the early apostolic Church faced the antagonisms of its own world. They felt their own personal emancipation. They felt the driving power of the constraining love of the Lord. They believed in the adequacy of redeeming grace. And when they met with obstacles they almost rejoiced in the obstacle. Almost ? Does not one Apostle say, ' My brethren, count it all joy when you come to a troublesome bit of road,' because they knew that a multiplication of the difficulties would only tend to manifest more gloriously the power of the grace of the Lord.

[1] F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul.*

The Perils of Unsettlement

Acts xx. 24.—' None of these things move me.'

St Paul was journeying to Jerusalem when he spoke these words. They were addressed to the elders of Ephesus, whom he had summoned to meet him at Miletus. It was a journey attended by much hazard, and Paul was aware how hazardous it was. Yet though bonds and imprisonment were in his prospect, and perhaps a shadow darker than imprisonment, the Apostle was able to say in all sincerity that none of these things moved him. Like his master, in a still darker hour, he set his face steadfastly towards Jerusalem. In other words, this great Apostle had overcome the perils of unsettlement.

No one can read the New Testament without observing that unsettlement was one of the deadliest perils of the apostolic Church. However fiercely other evils tried them, this one seems to have had peculiar power. The early Christians lived in the daily hope that Christ was coming. And this wrought such a ferment in their hearts, and seemed to release them so

from common obligations, that with all its victories and all its virtues the Early Church was a-quiver with unsettlement. Men threw down their tools and refused to work. They studied everything save their own business. Why should they take provident care against to-morrow, when at sunrise to-morrow Christ might come again? So there spread through apostolic days a spirit of unquiet and unrest, and men, through the very wonder of it all, were prone to be unbalanced for a little.

¶ We may recall Whittier's description of the scene in the Old State House at Connecticut on the famous Dark Day of New England, May 19, 1780. The terrifying darkness and silence of that day seemed to some of the members to foreshadow the end of the world:

'It is the Lord's Great Day! Let us adjourn,'
Some said; and then, as if with one accord,
All eyes were turned to Abraham Davenport.
He rose, slow cleaving with his steady voice
The intolerable hush. 'This well may be
The Day of Judgment which the world awaits;
But be it so or not, I only know
My present duty, and my Lord's command
To occupy till He come. So at the post
Where He hath set me in His providence,
I choose, for one, to meet Him face to face,—
No faithless servant frightened from my task,
But ready when the Lord of the harvest calls;
And therefore, with all reverence, I would say,
Let God do His work, we will see to ours.
Bring in the candles.' [1]

The perils of unsettlement come upon us in many ways. Sometimes they reach us through a staggering sorrow which lays the palace in ruins at our feet. Sometimes through the thrilling of good news or the excitement or variety of travel. Sometimes through the calling of the summer-time with its mystery of light and beauty, touching our hearts, and strangely stirring them, with cravings which we cannot well interpret. In such ways, and in other ways as evident, we are all in danger of unsettlement. We lose our grip on what we used to cling to. We are restless and know not what we want, and we lack the unity that makes for power, and so do we learn out of our own experience the perils which the Apostle mastered.

In the fullness of its disturbing strength, unsettlement is the pain and privilege of youth. Yet God has so ordered this strange life of ours that into every lot, however sheltered, sooner or later there break out of the infinite those things which are mighty to unsettle. From such disturbance there is no escape. We cannot expel the angels when they visit us. We must open the door to them, and bid them welcome, and say, 'Come in, thou blessed of the Lord.' Only thus can we hope to use for good that recurring disturbance of the heart which falls upon us all, in diverse ways, amid the joys and sorrows of humanity.

1. Let us consider some of the evils of unsettlement.

(1) *It makes our work harder to perform.*—For most men work is hard enough, even when they give to it an undivided mind. It takes every power and faculty which they possess to be honest toilers in the sight of Heaven. But work becomes doubly hard for all of us, and to certain natures grows well-nigh impossible, when these powers are inwardly distracted, and will not answer the summons of the hour. It is not easy to do the common duty under the shadow of overwhelming sorrow. It is not easy to ply the daily task under the new glow of a great joy. It is not easy to take the burden up, and to go quietly to our familiar place, when the glad and open world is calling us. That is the commonest peril of unsettlement.

(2) *It relaxes the hold of our good habits.*—Most of us are the creatures of habit in a far larger measure than we think. If it is to it that we owe many a weakness, it is to it also that we owe many a virtue. There are few men who can look back upon their lives, with gratitude to God that they have done a little, without recognizing what a debt they owe to one or two habits which were early formed. Such habits may be very simple, yet they have a wonderfully redeeming power. They redeem every day from being wasted, and every energy from being ineffectual. Now it is always one peril of unsettlement that it relaxes the hold of our good habits. It lifts us out of the embrace of good ones, and throws us into the embrace of evil ones. All men have a hunger for the good, but all men have a bias to the evil. It is that bias which the devil uses in the season of a man's unsettlement. Torn from his centre by unexpected incidence, caught into new and

[1] *Abraham Davenport.*

strange environment, a man is in peril because his grip is weakened on the steadying and simple habits of his past.

This is especially true of the habits of the interior life. Unsettlement is the peculiar enemy of regularity in private prayer. Who does not know how this interior grace is apt to be shed off like an old garment when the hour of unsettlement arrives? True, in a great catastrophe there is an instinct in the heart to pray. It is often then, when all the deeps are broken, that the pride which never prayed is broken too. But in all the lesser unsettlements of life there is the constant peril of forgetting the sweet and secret exercise of prayer. There are those who pray through years of drudgery, and who cease it when great good fortune comes. There are those who would never dream of omitting prayer at home, who yet omit it, not once only, amid the excitement and the stir of foreign travel. That is a grave peril of unsettlement.

¶ 'Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.' The king's edict made no difference to Daniel. He prayed *as he did aforetime*, rightly feeling that he dare make no change in his daily habits, or tamper with his conscience.

2. Now it is always one mark of a great character not to be easily or lightly moved. Of course there are natures more prone than others to yield to the pressure of unsettlement. There are dogged natures, and responsive natures, and there always shall be till the trumpet sounds. Still, speaking broadly and generally, we may say that to be unsettled lightly is a bad sign, and that one mark of nobility of character is a quiet and resolute continuance. The question is, then, how we, not being great, can hope to attain to that continuance. How can we organize into victory the common perils of unsettlement?

(1) *We are not to stand aloof.*—In many of the choicest gifts of God there is a terrible power of unsettlement, and a Christian was never meant to reject the gift because of the unsettlement it brings. Stoic philosophy sought to achieve serenity of life by steeling the soul against the passions. And what happened? One of two things happened. Sometimes men won the serenity they craved, but they won it at a tremendous cost. For love was banished, and the charm of things, and the touch of sympathy that makes us brothers. And sometimes in the very hour of victory nature, trampled on, rose to her rights again, and in her passionate and overmastering way swept down the defences they had built. It is no use fighting against nature. It is worse than useless fighting against God. We are not here to stand aloof from things, and to steel our hearts against disturbances. We are here to welcome whatever God may send, whether it be sunshine or sorrow, and somehow out of all unsettlement to wrest the music of our triumph-song.

(2) *We must learn to see things in their true proportions.*—Without a certain feeling for perspective, we can never be quiet in the thick of life. It is good to know a big thing when we see it. It is not less good to know a little thing. Next to the grace of God for throughbearing, there is nothing more kindly than a little humour. To see things in a smiling kind of way is often to see them in the wisest way. For as there are things, and always will be things, that strike to the very heart of human destiny, so are there things, and always will be things, that are so trifling as to be ridiculous. It is amazing how many worthy people seem never to have learned that simple lesson. They are always in peril of unsettlement, not because their experience is exceptional, but because they have never learned in life to see things in their true proportions.

¶ Perhaps the best story in Sir Henry Wilson's two volumes[1] is about a disappointment that came to him in 1915. He had expected a K.C.B., but his name did not appear in the list of awards. An officer on his staff relates how Sir Henry received the news. 'H. W. rode with me on the afternoon after the *Gazette* appeared, and I think had some feeling about it from what he said. He finished with the remark that he was now going up in his balloon. I did not understand. So he explained: "When I was young, my father, who was a very shrewd man, used to say, 'Now, whenever you are a bit down and things don't seem to be quite what they should be, just go up in your balloon.

[1] *Life and Diaries.*

As the world recedes you will look over the side and will note how all objects which bulked so large, and all the funny little men who seemed so prominent while you were on the earth, gradually diminish and diminish till they matter not at all. You will then regain your sense of proportion, and a true perspective of the things that really matter!' So I am now going up in my balloon."'

(3) *We must seek to see the hand of God in everything.*—When a man has come to see the hand of God in everything he touches the secret of the weaned heart. Among domestic servants one common reason of unsettlement is that they do not know who is the mistress, and have to take orders from half a dozen people. And all of us are servants in God's house, and always in our service we shall be irritable, unless there be one voice we must obey, and one will which gives us all our orders. To have many masters is always to be restless. 'I have set the Lord always before me,' said the Psalmist, 'therefore I shall not be moved.' To see *His* hand in the least and in the greatest, in the burden no less than in the blessing, is the sure way, amid all life's unsettlement, to have the heart at leisure from itself.

A Gospel of Redemption

Acts xx. 28.—'The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.'

THERE is a saying of old Samuel Rutherford's: 'The saints, what are they but a pack of redeemed sinners?' and even though the saying may seem to be a little derogatory and almost aggressive, yet we rejoice in it because it identifies character with redemption, and suggests to us that redemption is its basis. The Church, what is it but a society of redeemed people? The Church is not a forensic society; it is not a coalition of general goodwill; it is the society of those who acknowledge that they are redeemed by Jesus Christ.

1. Man does not find God; it is God who finds man. The whole of the Old Testament is a revelation of God's search for man. It is not simply a collection of the experiences of men who are seeking after God. May we not call it the story of God's increasing clutch upon man, whom He is seeking? May we not think of the revelation of Jesus Christ in its manifestation upon the Cross as the ultimate success of God in His campaign to recover man's will—within the lost province of the human heart? We stand upon the basis of redemption. We are people who recognize the movement in the Godhead which has achieved our redemption. 'We love him because he first loved us.' The motive which drives us on to service with loving hearts is the motive of gratitude to God, who has loved us with an everlasting love. The first point, then, is this: that the Church exists not as a result of man's search for God, but as a result of God's clutch upon man, achieved finally in redemption.

Oh, it is love that wins! We do not come,
Unwilling captives, to the feet of Him
Whom now we call our Lord: we do not come
In fear, to kneel before a Conqueror,
Compelled to do Him service—be His slaves—
By His great right of purchase, or of power,
Nay, it is love that conquers—love that wins.

Soul, dost thou know Him? Hast thou looked
on Him?
His face is full of tenderness for thee;
His heart is all compassion: when I look,
I learn His thoughts toward me—read His love,
Unspeakable, unchanging, boundless, strong,
And thus—constrained to love Him, and to
serve,
I cannot choose but yield myself to Him.[1]

2. The Church needs a renewed sense of its redeemed status. All the great phrases which we hear of to-day, and which mean so much to the world, are phrases to which we should give a special interpretation as a redeemed society. '*Fellowship.*' What has the Church to say about fellowship? We must recognize that not only is fellowship achieved along ethical lines—'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another'—but that we cannot achieve lasting fellowship apart from an experience of redemption—'and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' '*Re-union.*' We know that it is as the Cross becomes more and more central to us in our experience that the hope of re-union grows brighter and brighter. When men speak of '*Liberty*' we must teach

[1] Edith H. Divall.

them to interpret it in the terms of redemption —'that glorious liberty of the children of God.' We must see that liberty includes liberty of mind, liberty of soul, liberty from sinning, and liberty to enjoy God. '*Service.*' When we have to choose between competition and co-operation, between service of others and service of self, we take our cue from the blessed Lord Himself. 'The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' The spirit of Jesus is the spirit that manifests itself in the spirit of fellowship, of re-union, of liberty, and of service.

3. The gospel which the Church has to preach is the gospel of redemption. What do we need to press home to-day on the world? The reality of sin, the love of God as the operating force in man's destiny, the call to service. It is to the Cross of Jesus that we must go for vision and inspiration if that gospel is to be made effective in society and in the lives of men.

(1) The reality of sin. We are pledged to believe in the reality of sin, otherwise the redemption that is in Jesus Christ is thrown away. The final proof of the reality of sin is that God fights against it upon the Cross. How are we to bring men to see its reality, to bring them to the Cross of Jesus? There is the story of God working not from without but from within. Inside the misery and shame, inside all that is evil, inside society organized as we know it, with all its impurity, uncleanness, greed, and hatred. On the Cross we see God in the middle of all that. As we look upon the Cross we come to see the aggressiveness and the hatefulness of sin. What we see on a small scale in the story of Joan of Arc or any other romantic figure, we see on a vast, world-wide scale in the story of Jesus. It is the world's sin which submerges Christ and slays Him with every conceivable torment and ignominy and shame. There is the religious bigotry of the High Priests, which hates to hear the voice of God coming from outside its own ranks; there is the profiteering spirit—not the modern, but a very ancient growth—seeking vengeance on Him who cleansed the Temple and robbed the Jewish profiteers of their market; there is political ambition, seeking to remove the idealist as a disturbing and impossible factor; there is the blind impulse of the mob goaded into violence, cruel, unreasoning, bestial, which fills the streets of Jerusalem with shouts of 'Crucify Him! Crucify Him!' And as it was then, so it is now. There is a dreadful solidarity about human sin which unites the sinning ages one to another. Whenever we consent to the sins that nailed Christ to the Cross, when covetousness, malice, selfishness, lay hold of us, whenever we sacrifice goodness for the sake of passing pleasure or advantage, we crucify Christ afresh.

And dar'st thou venture still to live in sin,
And crucify thy dying Lord again?
Were not His pangs sufficient? Must He bleed
Yet more? Oh, must our sinful pleasures feed
Upon His torments, and augment the story
Of the sad passion of the Lord of glory!
Is there no pity? Is there no remorse
In human breasts? Is there a firm divorce
Betwixt all mercy and the hearts of men?
Parted forever,—ne'er to meet again?
No mercy bides with us: 'tis Thou alone
Hast it, sweet Jesus, for us, that have none
For Thee: Thou hast forestall'd our markets so,
That all's above, and we have none below:
Nay, blessed Lord, we have not wherewithal
To serve our shiftless selves: unless we call
To Thee, Thou art our Saviour, and hast power
To give, and whom we crucify each hour:
We are cruel, Lord, to Thee, and ourselves too;
Jesus, forgive us; we know not what we do.[1]

(2) How are we going to persuade men that love is really the great operative force in deciding man's destiny? Does the world speak to us with absolute clearness of God's love? Can we find elsewhere than at the Cross, and in the story of Jesus, absolute, convincing, and overwhelming proof that human life is surrounded with love, and the great dynamic force is love itself? It is to the Cross that we must go. There all the wonder of God's love is revealed. Whatever people may say about the rationale of the particular method that He took, the fact remains that there is nothing in the history of the world, there is nothing to which the Church has ever put its hand in the effort to save men, there is nothing which has so lifted men out of sin and raised them up to communion with God as the Cross of Jesus.

It is still the love that is wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities

[1] Francis Quarles.

which breaks in us individually and corporately —there is no other way—the love of sin, releases us from its power, and creates in us the springs of action which make a new life possible.

(3) It is the Cross that shows us the one way in which the Church can save the world. We are so tempted to put our faith in a political programme, so tempted to think that we have discovered the quick and easy way, so tempted to identify ourselves with one particular order of society or one particular line of conduct. But there is no other way than Christ's way, the way of service, the way of sacrifice, the way of love. The Church which is built upon redemption cannot depart from the methods of redemption.

We cannot separate Christ's death from His life. The life is crowned by the death, the death is explained by the life. Everything that He lived for burns more brightly in His death. His unfaltering service, His faith in the Father's kingdom, His love for man, His denial of the false, His belief in the appeal that love can make —all this is illuminated in the Cross with a light that can never die. There is no other way for us, in our dealing with the world or with poor, broken, sinful humanity, than to go back to the Cross of Jesus for light, for inspiration, for power, for service.

¶ I see many knights going to the Holy Land beyond the seas, and thinking that they can acquire it by force of arms; but in the end all are destroyed before they attain that which they think to have. Whence it seems to me that the conquest of the Holy Land ought not to be attempted except in the way in which Thou and Thine Apostles acquired it—namely, by love and prayers, and the pouring out of tears and blood.[1]

What the world needs to-day is people who believe that Christ's way can redeem the world, people who, in the language of the New Testament, 'have put on Christ, been crucified with Christ, and who are risen with Christ.' Until we identify ourselves in mystic experience with the whole life of Jesus, the Church will be weak in the presence of its problems and its task. Meanwhile society is in chaos, the world is perishing, and people are not saved. We too must be wounded for the world's transgressions; we must be bruised for the world's sin.

[1] Raymond Lull.

Positive Ethics

Acts xx. 35.—'I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

THE ethical teaching of Jesus is positive, not negative. This is one of its prime characteristics.

1. In making His ethics positive, not negative, Jesus put Himself in contrast with other codes of morals. For instance, He put Himself in contrast with the ethics of common life. How often we hear in our own homes the statement made about something: 'Oh, it will do no harm.' Modes of spending time, for example, are defended with this plea, 'They will do no harm.' It is not said they will do good, but only negatively it is said they will do no harm. Now, that is below the standard of Jesus. Why should we not devote our time to things that will do good? To triflers, time is the cheapest of all commodities, but to a wise man it is more precious than gold, and he has none of it to waste upon things the only recommendation of which is that they do no harm.

Then, again, in this respect Jesus' ethics differs from that embodied in the law of the land. The law of the land only asks that we should do no injury. It does not ask that we should do good. The policeman forces no one to give to the poor, or to visit the sick. He only sees that people do not steal or kill. To the law of the land the motive is nothing. If a man is honest it does not matter to the law whether he is honest from policy or from honour. If he does not injure his neighbour, the law never asks whether he loves or hates him. But Jesus asks, and with Him the motive is everything. He not only commands that we do no ill to our neighbour, but that we do him all the good that we can.

And in this respect the ethics of Jesus is in contrast even with that of the Old Testament. On the very face of it, the Decalogue is mainly negative. Nearly every one of its commandments begins with, 'Thou shalt not.' These are important, nay, indispensable words, because they erect a barrier against the savage and selfish passions of men; but Jesus goes deeper. He substitutes benevolent impulses for the

savage and selfish ones. This is what John the Baptist foresaw when he said of Him, 'I baptize you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.' John's teaching was, in substance, a repetition of the Decalogue. It washed men's sins away in water, but it left them cold. There was needed another baptism, a baptism of fire, that is, of warm, generous feelings, and that is what Jesus came to give.

¶ You remember Tennyson's description of Maud:

Maud, she has neither savour nor salt,
But a cold and clear-cut face, as I found when her carriage past,
Perfectly beautiful: let it be granted her: where is the fault?
All that I saw (for her eyes were downcast, not to be seen)
Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,
Dead perfection, no more.

What fails to attract in the individual fails equally in religion.

2. Perhaps the most striking of all the statements of this principle is to be found in the Parable of the Talents, one of those pictures of the Last Judgment which Jesus frequently introduced into His teaching. It may be that these were only the pictorial ways that Jesus had of visualizing the kind of judgment that is being passed on our lives now; for we may depend upon it that Jesus is applying to our lives now the same principles that He will apply to them at the last day. Well, the real point of the Parable of the Talents lies in what is said to the servant to whom only one talent was given. To him his talent was given, as to the others, that he might trade with it on his master's behalf. But he had done nothing of the kind. Why not? His reason was that he was afraid. He mistrusted his own ability to engage in trade, in which there are often losses. He thought that if he tried to engage in trade he might lose the money, and he was the more afraid of doing that because it was not his own money but his master's. And so what he did was to wrap the money up in a napkin, and hide it in the earth, so that it might be perfectly safe from robbery, and when his master came back he had it intact to give back just as he had received it.

Now, this is a picture of negative morality, the morality which makes goodness consist in not doing things. Judged according to this morality this was an excellent man. He had done no harm. Why, he might have decamped with the money. Many rogues, entrusted with the capital of others, do that. He might have spent the money in riotous living. Many do that with money entrusted to them. But he had kept the money intact; he had delivered it as he had received it; and his reason for doing nothing with it was an excellent one. It was the reason of a modest man—he did not believe in his own ability. And yet what was the verdict? 'Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness.' There could not be a more solemn and forcible statement of positive ethics. It is not enough to do no harm; we must do all the good that we can. That is the principle by which we are to be tried at the last, and by which we are being tried now. This man had but one talent—perhaps a hint that people slenderly endowed are more apt than others to neglect doing anything with their ability. But are there not plenty with five talents, and with two talents, who are doing nothing with them?

3. There is another of our Lord's pictures of the Last Judgment in which this same principle is again remarkably brought out. It is that grand tableau in which mankind is represented as a flock of sheep and goats, mixed, which the shepherd divides into the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. To those on His left hand the Judge says: 'I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; I was sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.' Whereupon they exclaim: 'Lord, when saw we thee naked, or thirsty, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?' They were genuinely surprised. They thought that what was demanded of them was simply that they should do no harm. They never had harmed those people to whom Jesus referred. They had only failed to do them good, and therefore they were condemned.

¶ 'Small is the use,' it has been said, 'of those people who mean well, but who mean well feebly.' Yet the number of such people is large. If it be true, as a popular novelist

makes one of her characters say, that there are some saints of whom God Himself grows tired, it must be these. Not with the men who struggle and fail, not with those who fight and lose does God grow weary (if, indeed, He does grow weary), but with the men and women who are content if they can avoid the more glaring sins, and satisfied if they can come to the end of life 'without having done any one any harm.' [1]

Now, this parable gives us, further, a notion of what are the acts of positive morality. What are the things that Jesus wishes us positively to do for others? They are to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick, and do other deeds of mercy. There are many people who never steal, never kill, never commit adultery, but never think of visiting the sick, or clothing the poor, or doing works of mercy. There is a wide diffusion to-day of what is called 'altruistic sentiment,' but it is not words and sentiment that Jesus demands, but acts, and these are extremely few. Not that we are to rush out to the poor parts of the town, and fling our money in the streets, or even to give money to every one who seeks it at our door. We are to 'consider' the poor, as the Bible says. Inconsiderate giving does a great deal more harm than good. We may do much more for the poor by grappling with the causes of poverty, and restoring to men the sense of their own dignity. What Christ oftenest asked His followers to give was their own faith. That had made them blessed, and it was able to make others blessed. The most characteristic thing about Christianity is this impulse on the part of those who have been blessed with Christ to communicate their secret to others.

¶ Ian Maclaren once declared that by far the finest peroration to any sermon he ever heard was that of a Shropshire labourer, who brought his simple and moving address to a close with these words: 'Friends, you may wonder why I am here to preach when, after a hard week, I might well have rested. This is the reason—I cannot eat my bread alone.'

4. The text, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' is the only word of Jesus, that we are sure of being His, not recorded in the Gospels. It is a very characteristic word for St Paul to have recovered, and remembered, and transmitted to posterity, and certainly it is one of the most characteristic words of Christ Himself. It is again a great expression of positive ethics.

This world is about evenly divided in the givers and receivers. There is a class of people who are always giving, and a class of people who are always receiving. There are the givers—those who are always diffusing sunshine, always helping, always bringing generous ideas forth; and then there are the receivers—those who are always leaning on others, expecting others to help them, and the expectations of some go a very long way indeed. Now, the tendency of Christianity is to place men and women among the class of the givers, and surely it does not require very much proof to show that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Those who practise positive ethics in the ways that we have indicated often look as if they had to sacrifice a great deal, and so they have. But are they not compensated when the blessing of him that is ready to perish comes upon them, and when they cause the widow's heart to sing for joy? And when we meet in the other world any who have been helped through our instrumentality, will not heaven—to use the beautiful phrase of Samuel Rutherford—be two heavens to us?

But the blessedness of positive ethics does not stop here. The great reward of this positive way of living is, that the more we do and the more we give, the more we become capable of doing and giving. That is expressed by Jesus in one of His greatest ethical sayings: 'To him that hath more shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.' Is not that principle illustrated in business? The man who has capital gets more capital. A business carried on with a big capital is easily extended, but in business a small capital is very easily swept away. A man who has but a small capital often finds himself, in the most mysterious way, reduced to having nothing. And so the man who is doing a great deal for God and for man finds his opportunities for larger and finer work constantly extending, whereas the man whose benevolent work is limited and cold, is very apt in a short time to give it up altogether.

This is true—that those who give much would

[1] J. Colville, *The Christian Optimist*, 31.

need to get much. We cannot be always giving out if we are not receiving at the same time. But this is the best of all! 'Give, and it shall be given unto you.' Give, and God will give to you your grace, and ever more. That is the reward of positive ethics.

Is thy cruse of comfort wasting? Rise and share it with another,
And through all the years of famine it shall serve thee and thy brother:
Love divine will fill thy storehouse, or thy handful still renew;
Scanty fare for one will often make a royal feast for two.

For the heart grows rich in giving; all its wealth is living grain;
Seeds (which mildew in the garner) scattered fill with gold the plain.
Is thy burden hard and heavy? do thy steps drag wearily?
Help to bear thy brother's burden—God will bear both it and thee.

Is the heart a well left empty? None but God its void can fill;
Nothing but a ceaseless fountain can its ceaseless longings still.
Is the heart a living power? Self-entwined, its strength sinks low;
It can only live in loving, and by serving love will grow.[1]

The Beatitude of the Giver

Acts xx. 35.—'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

From what source St Paul obtained this, the only saying of our Lord, definitely so described, outside the four Gospels, we cannot tell, but the command to 'remember' shows that the words must have been familiar words, like those from St Clement and St Polycarp, which are very similar to the utterance of the Sermon on the Mount. From whatever source they are derived, references in the Apostolic Fathers show how deep an impression they made upon the mind of the Church.

'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' The phrase may sound strange enough to arrest us, though it is the secret, silent verdict of every heart. We may try to forget it, we may rebel against it, we may shape our conduct in defiance of it, but it vindicates itself. The failure of every selfish pleasure to satisfy the soul, the weariness which follows self-indulgence, the sense of weakness and distrust which comes from powers unused and duties unpursued, confirm the sentence which is executed sooner or later by the conditions of society. We were made to serve one another: we are happiest when we fulfil the law of our being.

¶ It's plain enough you get into the wrong road i' this life if you run after this and that only for the sake o' making things easy and pleasant for yourself.[1]

'It is *more blessed* to give than to receive.' Our Lord does not say it is more natural or more pleasant. He lifts our thoughts into a new region. He appeals to the spiritual and the eternal. He bids us consider the issue and the permanence of conduct. And we cannot understand His words till we feel that they are of universal application. The principle is not to be limited to the material bestowal of alms, to the help of the needy and the suffering. It does indeed apply here, but in such cases we can see that the power of giving involves an obvious superiority, an abundance of resources, a freedom from distress, which tend to hide the true nature of the benediction. The blessedness of which the Lord speaks is far deeper than ease and comfort. The giving which He contemplates is not measured by any outward standard. The spirit which the giving embodies finds countless forms under which it shows itself. It reaches through the whole fabric of our lives. It is true of thought, true of feeling, true of action, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. And this blessedness is not for one but for all. We can all be givers as we are all receivers. In the unity of the State he who gives recognizes in giving that he himself receives, and he who receives learns to give even in receiving.

1. *It is true of thought.*—Few things can be more delightful than to enrich the mind with new truths; to apprehend a little more clearly than before the laws by which the world is governed; to discern a little more intelligently the marvels of beauty which lie everywhere

[1] Elizabeth Charles.

[1] George Eliot.

about our feet; to rise to a larger understanding of the conditions of human progress; to feel that we have made our own that which great men have established for the ennobling and the enlightening of life. Few things can be more delightful, but our experience will teach us that at least one thing is—if ever we have been enabled to make some simple fact plainer to a learner; to bring from our treasures a thought which another has required; to expose a falsehood which a friend has unwarily admitted; to see the seed of good which we have scattered ripening to a fruitful harvest. We compare the two joys of learning and teaching, both pure, and generous, and abiding, and our judgment is beyond appeal. In thought it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Because I would be young in soul and mind,
Though years must pass and age my life constrain,
And I have found no way to lag behind
The fleeting years, save by the magic chain
That binds me, youthful, to the youth I love, I teach.

Because in passing on the living flame
That ever brighter burns the ages through,
I have done service that is worth the name,
Can I but say, 'The flame of knowledge grew
A little brighter in the hands I taught,' I teach.[1]

2. *It is true of feeling.*—No one, again, can be insensible to the deep joy which comes from feeling that others love us: that there are those who wait with watchful eagerness to render to us offices of kindly ministry; to serve the cause which we embrace, to follow where we lead, to yield their own wills to our judgment. Such tender and brave devotion enlarges the scope of our life, and multiplies the powers of our action. As a nature is generous and lofty, such devotion disciplines and purifies it. But there is something higher still. To love is better, nobler, more elevating and more sure than to be loved. To love is to have found that which lifts us above ourselves, which makes us capable of sacrifice, which unseals the forces of another world. He who is loved has gained the highest tribute of earth. He who loves has entered into the spirit of heaven. The love which comes to us must always be alloyed with the sad sense of our own unworthiness. The love which goes out from us is kept bright by the ideal to which it is directed. In feeling, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

3. *It is true of action.*—In the daily conduct of life we grow stronger and more courageous when we know that a host of fellow-workers are furthering the labours in which we are busy. Their force sustains us when we faint. Their energy inspires us with enthusiasm. Their example stirs us to rivalry. We are not going to disparage the greatness of the debt which we owe to friends and fellow-citizens, or to lessen the gladness of gratitude. But he who has turned aside from the march of the great army to bring help to one who has fallen, he who yielded a foremost place that he might restore another, has felt something of the joy of his Lord, the joy of absolute self-surrender, and known that there is a priceless victory in what seems to be failure in the eyes of men. In action it is more blessed to give than to receive.

¶ One night I got a letter from one of the students of the University of Edinburgh, page after page of agnosticism and atheism. I went over to see him, and spent a whole afternoon with him, and did not make the slightest impression. A few nights after this I saw that man at the Sunday meeting, and next to him sat another man whom I had seen occasionally at the meetings. I did not know his name, but I wanted to find out more about my sceptical student, so, when the meeting was over, I went up to him and said, 'Are you an old friend of ——?' 'I am an American, a graduate of an American University,' he said. 'After I had finished there I wanted to take a post-graduate course, and finally decided to come to Edinburgh. In the dissecting-room I happened to be placed next to ——, and I took a singular liking for him. I found out that he was a man of very remarkable ability, though not a religious man, and I thought I might be able to do something for him!' 'I think you said,' I resumed, 'that you only came here to take a year of the post-graduate course!' 'Well,' he said, 'I packed my trunks to go home, and I thought of this friend, and I wondered whether a year of my life would be better spent to go and start my profession in America, or to stay in Edinburgh and try to win that one man for

[1] L. B. Woodward.

Christ, and I stayed.' 'Well!' I said, 'my dear fellow, it will pay you; you will get that man.' Two or three months passed, and it came to the last night of the meetings, when the students sit down together in our common hall for the Lord's Supper, and there I saw the student handing the communion cup to his American friend. He had got his man. A week after the American was back in his own country. I do not know his name; he was just a subject of Christ's kingdom, doing His work in silence and in humility.[1]

There are, in brief, two views of life. According to the one, the aim of man is to gain wealth and knowledge and power and fame—not, perhaps, for self-indulgence, but still so that self is the centre to which every acquisition is referred. According to the other, the aim of man is to use every gift and every opportunity so that self is the spring from which every possession flows forth to the world around. Both lives may be equal in enterprise, in vigour, in self-mastery, but can we doubt for one moment which is the more blessed? It is enough to ask ourselves when we have felt happiest. Was it when we have pleased ourselves, or when we have pleased others; when we have taken that which another has given up, or given up that which another has taken; when we have gained the end of some not unworthy ambition, or when we have been enabled to fulfil with cheerfulness some unwelcome duty? One answer will come—one answer comes now—from every heart, even if it be burdened with sad regrets for lost opportunities: It is more blessed to give than to receive.

O Lord, I pray
That for this day
I may not swerve
By foot or hand
From Thy command,
Not to be served, but to serve.

This, too, I pray,
That for this day
No love of ease
Nor pride prevent
My good intent,
Not to be pleased, but to please.

And if I may,
I'd have this day
Strength from above
To set my heart
In heavenly art,
Not to be loved, but to love.

[1] George Adam Smith, *The Life of Henry Drummond*, 338.

Parting

Acts xx. 38.—'Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more.'

The story of St Paul's farewell at Miletus brings before us the most moving scene in the life of the Apostle of which we have any record. It is all sheer beauty and tenderness. These good men, elders of the Ephesian Church, accompanying the Apostle to the very ship, keeping back the last words to the very end, their helpless grief, the clinging to one another, the clinging together to God, and at last the actual physical separation—how deeply we all understand these things.

But bitter as that experience of parting was to Paul and to those warm-hearted friends of his, we feel, as we look on, that in some real way it was a good hour for them all. For at the root of every extreme feeling there is always already a touch of its opposite; and in the bitterness of a separation there is already something more than bitterness, and something quite different from bitterness. In the very distress of parting there comes to us a new depth of love, a new tenderness, a new sense of God, and this, unless we are disloyal to our love, remains with us as the real experience and message of the parting hour.

¶ 'Tis a great and mysterious gift, this clinging of the heart, my Esther, whereby it hath often seemed to me that even in the very moment of suffering our souls have the keenest foretaste of heaven. I speak not lightly, but as one who hath endured. And 'tis a strange truth that only in the agony of parting we look into the depths of love.[1]

1. What is it that makes the parting from our friends a painful thing even when there is every prospect that we shall meet again after a few weeks or months? What is it that we feel as we say good-bye, and watch some one

[1] George Eliot, *Felix Holt*.

being borne from us—the train moving slowly down the platform, or the ship moving away from its berth? What is it that rises to our very lips at such a moment? Perhaps it is that we feel then most poignantly how uncertain our life is; what grave things may happen to us in the interval before we meet again. It may be that. But that is not the whole account of it. It is something deeper than any explanation. If it could be altogether explained it would long since have been overcome, whereas it is never really overcome.

No: at such a moment it is not the real parting that we feel; it is other things; it is everything. That shrinking from words, that helpless looking at each other across a gulf which, however narrow, is now impassable—what is it but the soul seeing for one moment more than it can bear! What is it but perhaps the foretaste upon our lips of death itself!

Certainly there is no experience so well fitted to set us thinking seriously and religiously about this whole life of ours as just the hour when we are parting or have parted from some one very dear to us. What truths come home to us at such a moment! That man indeed does not live by bread alone! That the real thing in man is just this high capacity of his, the source alike of his grandeur and of his gloom, this capacity of his for love! How we understand, too, at such a moment the great saying, *Caritas est passio*—love is an agony!—that we are each of us alone and separate, and that our last hunger and cry is that we may not be alone! 'Oh, that we might die in pairs or companies,' cried Faber, speaking for us all.

Here, then, is one thing which we must, if we are honest, place on the credit side of the ancient controversy between faith and fear—this, namely, that there are some things which we could never have known if we had never bidden a farewell, if we had never stood realizing our utter helplessness face to face with the difficulty of life, if we had never had to come away from the place of our parting condemned, as we felt at the moment, to take up our life again with such hope and resource as we are able to find in the depths of our own souls. The things which we consider in our life most disastrous may be the very things which simply had to be if we were to become what God would have us be and what in His great charity He sees that we are capable of becoming.

¶ The more one knows of the most afflicted lives, the more often the conviction flashes across us that the affliction is not a wanton outrage but a delicately adjusted treatment. A friend of the writer had sent him a rare plant, which was set in a big flower-pot, and placed close to a fountain-basin. It never throve; it lived, indeed, putting out in the spring a delicate stunted foliage, though the friend, who was a careful gardener, could never divine what ailed it. He was away for a few weeks, and the day after he was gone, the flower-pot was broken by a careless garden-boy, who wheeled a barrow roughly past it; the plant, earth and all, fell into the water; the boy removed the broken pieces of the pot, and seeing that the plant had sunk to the bottom of the little pool, never troubled his head to fish it out. When the friend returned, he noticed one day in the fountain a new and luxuriant growth of some unknown plant. He made careful inquiries and found out what had happened. It then came out that the plant was in reality a water-plant, and that it had pined away in the stifling air for want of nourishment, perhaps dimly longing for the fresh bed of the pool! Even so has it been, times without number, with some starving and thirsty soul that has gone on feebly trying to live a maimed life, shut up in itself, ailing, feeble. There has descended upon it what looks at first sight a calamity, some affliction unaccountable and irreparable; and then it proves that this was the one thing needed; that sorrow has brought out some latent unselfishness, or suffering energized some unused faculty of strength and patience.[1]

2. On the night on which our Lord was to be separated from His disciples, on the night before He died, He spoke long and seriously to them about this terrible business of human separations. We can see very well what He was trying to do for them: what He did do for them, though they did not know it at the time. He was planting one or two thoughts, ideas, words in their minds, which would come back upon them, and, after the panic of His death had somewhat subsided, would become their strength and everlasting portion. Three things He said; and, if we believe them, death has lost its sting.

[1] A. C. Benson.

For one thing, He said: 'It is expedient for you that I go away.' That is to say, it is good for us that one day we separate. It discovers to us our true nature, it lets out our hearts, it breaks in upon our secular darkness and deadness. It gives the unseen world its chance with us. It wipes from the face of eternity the blur of temporary things. It throws open some long unused door, some everlasting door by which the King of Glory may come in. The dropping away from our side of a beloved form may do that, said Jesus—ought to do that, is designed by God in order to do just that.

The second thing which Jesus said on the night before He died was—When this thing happens to you 'let not your heart be troubled,' agitated, put off its centre. 'Believe'—in God, in Me, in the future.

And indeed that is what we have to do; in a sense it is all we can do. In the deep places of our life, however, when we can say truthfully of some course that it is all we have, let us henceforth put a new note into that saying and declare, not 'it is all we have,' but 'we have all that.'

The third thing He said was, 'I will see you again.' 'I will see you again'—that is Christianity.

¶ Speaking of his last interview with Mrs Oliphant, then on her death-bed, Dr Story says: Her voice was still strong with its old, familiar tone; her wonderful eyes were as lambent as ever; and her mind was as calm and clear as a summer's sea. 'I am dying,' she said, 'I do not think I can last through the night.' Thinking of the 'Little Pilgrim' and the 'Seen and the Unseen,' and the many touching efforts her eager imagination had made to lift the impenetrable veil, I said, 'The world to which you are going is a familiar world to you.' 'I have no thoughts,' she replied, 'not even of my boys; but only of my Saviour waiting to receive me, and of my Father.'[1]

The Sighting of Cyprus

Acts xxi. 3.—'When we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand.'

THERE is more in these words than meets the eye. They not only have to do with the sailing of a ship, but are entries in the log-book of a soul. If we would understand them we must picture a man prematurely grey, bent with a life of hard toil, and bearing the marks of both mental and physical suffering—picture him leaning over the gunwale, thinking long, long thoughts as the vessel skirts the island of memories. Barnabas, that big mountain of a man; the mists of darkness that enveloped the sorcerer, Elymas; Sergius Paulus, the straight Roman proconsul who had discovered that he had a soul; those wonderful days of missionary activity and of the right hand of the Most High. And then misunderstandings, a cleavage in an old friendship that ran deep and dividing, and never again a repetition of those Cyprus days together. Yes, he had been too hasty that day in the matter of young John Mark, forgetting that Barnabas, who had been big enough to trust Saul the persecutor when no other man would go near him, would surely want to give his own nephew another chance to make good. And not even Paul's magnificent *amende honorable* in his letter—his last letter, to Timothy—could ever restore the past. A glimpse, two glimpses of Cyprus from the sea, as he came and as he went for the last time, but never again a night in the home of his old friend and comrade. 'The winds were contrary.' What had been done could never be undone.

1. One's first reflection on that pathetic figure straining his eyes to catch a fleeting glimpse of the fast retreating island is of the tragedy of it. So near, and yet so far! To sail twice under the lee of Cyprus, and yet because of contrary winds or because of pressure of other things—'we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unlade her burden'—to be unable to land, and seek out the old comrade, and shake him by the hand, and make it up again before the last long voyage of all! Our acts, our hasty words do so much more than we ever imagine at the time that they will do. We do not mean the thing to be final and irrevocable. But circumstances prove too much for us, and we are swept out by forces too strong for us to issues of which we never dreamt. Not all the goodwill in the world can avail against those contrary winds. And somehow, as the years drift on, it becomes no easier to make the landing, and offer the hand of friendship, and

[1] *Memoir of Robert Herbert Story*, 288.

seek forgiveness. The pressure of business keeps two lives apart, and circumstances seem to accentuate the difference, until Cyprus becomes a mist-girt island of regret, drifting farther and farther from us. 'A man should keep his friendships in repair,' said Samuel Johnson.

Tell us young ones, you gray old man,
What is your secret, if you can.
We have a ship as good as you,
Show us how to keep our crew.

So in his ear the youngster cries;
Then the gray Boatswain straight replies:—
'All your crew be sure you know,—
Never let one of your shipmates go.

If he leaves you, change your tack,
Follow him close and fetch him back;
When you've hauled him in at last,
Grapple his flipper and hold him fast.

If you've wronged him, speak him fair,
Say you're sorry, and make it square;
If he's wronged you, wink so tight,
None of you see what's plain in sight.

When the world goes hard and wrong,
Lend a hand to help him along.' [1]

Or the poignant tragedy of it may go deeper still, as in the case of one who leaves on the left, not a human friendship, but the Divine, sailing off from those bright shores of promise almost as soon as they have been sighted. To have God come over the bright horizon, and to sail on and pass Him by; to spend one's days in trafficking with Tyre, and never to have known the higher commerce—is there any tragedy like that? And yet is it not too often the history of generous young lives that have had the benefit of a religious upbringing? Cyprus can never be to them a name devoid of tender and gracious memories; but somehow they shy off from closer contact with religious experience. They are not found taking the place that it was hoped they would take in the higher life of the community. They have been 'almost persuaded,' but have never actually cast anchor.

¶ A newspaper writer has described a strange habit that seamen have of visiting a famous city without landing. He said: I spoke with the mate of a ship one day at Venice, and asked him how he liked the city. Well, he had not been ashore yet. He was told that he had better go ashore; that the Piazza San Marco was worth seeing. Well, he knew it, he had seen pictures of it; but he thought that he wouldn't go ashore. Why not, now he was here? Well, he laid out to go ashore the next time he came to Venice. So he lay three weeks with his ship, after a voyage of two months, and sailed away without even setting his foot on that enchanted ground.[1]

2. From the tragedy of those so seemingly casual words of the sacred historian we may turn to the thought of the trial involved. The ceding of Cyprus became a question of practical politics in the history of our nation during the Great War. For the obtaining of a desirable object, embracing the greater good of a common cause, it was actually proposed to part with it. So do there come times in the life of all of us when we are confronted with the question of the cession of something which has valuable privileges and wealth, which no figures can tabulate, in order that a larger gain may accrue, not necessarily to ourselves, but certainly to others.

There is a suggestion of this in the restrained language of the historian of St Paul's travels, when twice over he mentions the fact that Cyprus came upon his horizon, only to fade away again. The Apostle might, by a little less solicitude for the affairs of the Kingdom of God, have accomplished his heart's desire. He could have arranged to make a special visit to Cyprus, and gratified a personal longing at the expense of a larger labour. But the constraint of Christ had a mightier grip of him than the claims of natural inclination or even of human friendship. The time was short and the need was great. Barnabas and Mark were there to give the gospel to Cyprus.

Who shall measure the depth of Paul's disappointment as for the second time—and he must have known well it was probably the last time—he realized that Cyprus was not going to fit into his mission? Once again in lesser things as in greater—and sometimes it seems harder to make the sacrifice in the one than in the other—he had to sacrifice self to service, desire to duty.

[1] Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Old Cruiser.*

[1] W. L. Watkinson.

For saints in life-long exile yearn to touch
Warm human hands, and commune face to face;
But these we know not ever met again;
Yet once St Paul at distance overmuch
Just sighted Cyprus; and once more in vain
Neared it and passed; not there his landing-place.

Here, too, the Apostle sails very near the experience of many a one. So often, if we are to enter into life at all effectively, we have sooner or later to submit to some amputation of the natural affections and inclinations, some limitation of our just ambitions and obvious qualifications. We must choose between our comfort and our cause, between Bethany and Calvary, between Cyprus and Rome. And then blessed is the man who can 'turn his soul's necessity to glorious gain,' who sees not the loss to himself so much as the advantage to the cause he serves.

¶ A soldier of France lay on a hospital-bed. His shattered arm had just been taken away. The surgeon looked down with pity at the white young face. 'I'm sorry, my boy, you had to lose your arm,' he said. The eyes of the lad flashed. 'No, no, doctor, I didn't lose it,' he said, 'I *gave* it—to France.' His head sank back on his pillow, and he whispered, '*My* France.'

'I would have you know, brethren,' wrote the Apostle to his friends at Philippi, 'that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.' And that knowledge made it less hard to leave Cyprus on the left hand, and all that Cyprus stood for.

Who order'd, that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?
Who renders vain their deep desire?—
A God, a God their severance ruled!
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.[1]

'When we had discovered Cyprus, we left it.' But 'so we came to Rome.'

3. And when we have got so far we have already realized not so much the tragedy of those words of St Luke as just the sheer triumph of them. Sometimes even in our own short and circumscribed experience we are permitted to understand why no landing was allowed at Cyprus. It probably seemed little enough like the resistance of the Holy Spirit at the time. It probably looked far more like a chain of most untoward and exasperating circumstances. It was only afterwards, when the door into Europe opened so surprisingly and so memorably, that the missionaries realized that it was the Spirit, and were glad that the little gate into Bithynia had been closed to them.

And so our business is to help people to realize God. It will be a great service to the community if we can all contrive to make the public worship of His house the glorious and heart-stirring action which it ought to be, and once was. Whether they will listen to our talking matters very little, and sometimes it is better that they should not; but it does matter that they should not go through life missing the highest moments that are possible to the human spirit, and never tasting the new life of fellowship in adoration.

[1] Matthew Arnold.

An Old Disciple

Acts xxi. 16.—'Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple.'

THERE is something that stimulates the imagination in these mere shadows of men that we meet in the New Testament story. What a strange fate that is to be made immortal by a line in this book—immortal and yet so unknown! We do not hear another word about this host of Paul's, but his name will be familiar to men's ears till the world ends. This figure is drawn in the slightest possible outline, with a couple of hasty strokes of the pencil. But if we take even these few bare words and look at them, feeling that there is a man like ourselves sketched in them, we can get a real picture out of them, and we may find that even this dim form crowded into the background of the apostolic story has something to say to us.

His name and his birthplace show that Mnason belonged to the same class as Paul, that is, he was a Hellenist, or a Jew by descent, but born on Gentile soil, and speaking Greek. He came from Cyprus, the native island of Barnabas, who may have been a friend of his. He was 'an old disciple,' which means not simply that he was advanced in life, but that

he was 'a disciple from the beginning', one of the original group of believers. If we interpret the word strictly, we must suppose him to have been one of the rapidly diminishing nucleus who thirty years or more ago had seen Christ in the flesh, and been drawn to Him by His own words. Evidently the mention of the early date of his conversion suggests that the number of his contemporaries was becoming few, and that there was a certain honour and distinction conceded by the second generation of the Church to the survivors of the primitive band. Then, of course, as one of the earliest believers, he must, by this time, have been advanced in life. A Cypriote by birth, he had emigrated to, and resided in, a village on the road to Jerusalem; and must have had means and heart to exercise a liberal hospitality there. Though a Hellenist like Paul, he does not seem to have known the Apostle before, for the most probable rendering of the context is that the disciples from Cæsarea who were travelling with the Apostle from that place to Jerusalem 'brought us to Mnason,' implying that this was their first introduction to each other. But though probably unacquainted with the great teacher of the Gentiles —whose ways were looked on with much doubt by many of the Palestinian Christians—the old man, relic of the original disciples as he was, had full sympathy with Paul, and opened his house and his heart to receive him. His adhesion to the Apostle would no doubt carry weight with 'the many thousands of Jews which believed, and were all zealous of the law,' and was as honourable to him as it was helpful to Paul.

1. Many a year had passed since the days when perhaps the beauty of the Master's own character and the sweetness of His own words had drawn this man to Him. How much had come and gone since then—Calvary and the Resurrection, Olivet and the Pentecost! His own life and mind had changed from buoyant youth to sober old age. His whole feelings and outlook on the world were different. His old friends had mostly gone. A new generation was rising round about him, and new thoughts and ways were at work. But one thing remained for him what it had been in the old days, and that was Christ.

There is no fairer or happier experience than that of the old man who has around him the old loves, the old confidences, and some measure of the old joys. But who can secure that blessed unity in his life if he depend on the love and help of even the dearest, or on the light of any creature, for his sunshine? There is but one way of making all our days one, because one love, one hope, one joy, one aim binds them all together, and that is by taking the abiding Christ for ours, and abiding in Him all our days. Holding fast by the early convictions does not mean stiffening in them. There is plenty of room for advancement in Christ. No doubt Mnason, when he was first a disciple, knew but very little of the meaning and worth of his Master and His work compared with what he had learned in all these years. And our true progress consists, not in growing away from Jesus but in growing up into Him, not in passing through and leaving behind our first convictions of Him as Saviour, but in having these verified by the experience of years, deepened and cleared, unfolded and ordered into a larger, though still incomplete, whole.

¶ There is something essentially irreligious in the attitude portrayed in the biography of Horace Walpole, who, when Queen Caroline tried to induce him to read Butler's *Analogy*, told her that his religion was fixed, and that he had no desire either to change or to improve it. A believer's heart is fixed; his soul is stayed on God; but his experience is constantly expanding.[1]

As wider skies broke on his view,
God greatened in his growing mind,
Each year he dreamed his God anew,
And left his older God behind.
He saw the boundless scheme dilate
In star and blossom, sky and clod,
And as the universe grew great
He dreamed for it a greater God.

2. It is evidently meant that we should note Mnason's position in the Church as significant in regard to his hospitable reception of the Apostle. We can fancy how the little knot of 'original disciples' would be apt to value themselves on their position, especially as time went on, and their ranks were thinned. They would be tempted to suppose that they must needs understand the Master's meaning a great deal better than those who had never known Christ

[1] H. S. Coffin, *Some Christian Convictions*, 37.

after the flesh; and no doubt they would be inclined to share in the suspicion with which the thorough-going Jewish party in the Church regarded this Paul, who had never seen the Lord. It would have been very natural for this good old man to have said, 'I do not like these new-fangled ways. There was nothing of this sort in my younger days. Is it not likely that we who were at the beginning of the gospel should understand the gospel and the Church's work without this new man coming to set us right? I am too old to go in with these changes.' All the more honourable is it that he should have been ready with an open house to shelter the great champion of the Gentile churches, and, as we may reasonably believe, with an open heart to welcome his teaching.

Does not this flexibility of mind and openness of nature to welcome new ways of work, when united with the persistent constancy in his old creed, make an admirable combination? It is one rare enough at any age, but especially in elderly men. We are always disposed to rend apart what ought never to be separated—the inflexible adherence to a fixed centre of belief and the freest ranging around the whole changing circumference. The man of strong convictions is apt to grip every trifle of practice and every unimportant bit of his creed with the same tenacity with which he holds its vital heart, and to take obstinacy for firmness, and dogged self-will for faithfulness to truth. The man who welcomes new light, and reaches forward to greet new ways, is apt to delight in having much fluid that ought to be fixed, and to value himself on a 'liberality' which simply means that he has no central truth and no rooted convictions. And as men grow older they stiffen more and more, and have to leave the new work for new hands, and the new thoughts for new brains. That is all in the order of nature, but so much the finer is it when we do see old Christian men who join to their firm grip of the old gospel the power of welcoming, and at least bidding God-speed to, new thoughts and new workers and new ways of work.

3. There is nothing to be said about this old man but that he was a disciple. He had done no great thing for his Lord. He was no teacher or preacher. No eloquence or genius was in him. No great heroic deed or piece of saintly endurance is to be recorded of him, but only this, that he had loved and followed Christ all his days.

What Mnason could do he did. It was not his vocation to go into the 'regions beyond,' like Paul; to guide the Church, like James; to put his remembrances of his Master in a book, like Matthew; to die for Jesus, like Stephen. But he could open his house for Paul and his company, and so take his share in their work. 'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward.' He that with understanding and sympathy welcomes and sustains the prophet shows thereby that he stands on the same spiritual level, and has the makings of a prophet in him, though he want the intellectual force and may never open his lips to speak the burden of the Lord. Therefore he shall be one in reward as he is in spirit. It does not matter, so far as the real spiritual worth of the act is concerned, what we do but only why we do it. All deeds are the same which are done from the same motive and with the same devotion; and He who judges not by our outward actions but by the springs from which they come, will at last bracket together as equals many who were widely separated here in the form of their service and the apparent magnitude of their work.

'She hath done what she could.' Her power determined the measure and the manner of her work. One precious thing she had, and only one, and she broke her one rich possession that she might pour the fragrant oil over His feet. Therefore her useless deed of utter love and uncalculating self-sacrifice was crowned by praise from His lips whose praise is our highest honour, and the world is still 'filled with the odour of the ointment.' So this old disciple's hospitality is strangely immortal, and the record of it reminds us that the smallest service done for Jesus is remembered and treasured by Him. Men have spent their lives to win a line in the world's chronicles, which are written on sand, and have broken their hearts because they failed; and this passing act of one obscure Christian, in sheltering a little company of travel-stained wayfarers, has made his name a possession for ever.

If you cannot on the ocean
Sail among the swiftest fleet,
Rocking on the highest billows,
Laughing at the storms you meet,

You can stand among the sailors,
Anchored yet within the bay,
You can lend a hand to help them,
As they launch their boats away.

If you are too weak to journey
Up the mountain steep and high,
You can stand within the valley,
While the multitudes go by.

You can chant in happy measure,
As they slowly pass along;
Though they may forget the singer,
They will not forget the song.

Religion and Prejudice

Acts xxi. 23-25.—'Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written, and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.'

1. How strange and dry and formal the details sound! How totally without significance! The drama of the Acts is just touching its tragic, its culminating hour. It is the moment when, in spite of beseechings and tears that all but broke his heart, St Paul has flung himself into the peril. Jerusalem is astir from end to end. The chiefs of the Church cannot answer for peace, unless he walk with the utmost caution and reserve. What the storm of passion is which they are struggling to hold in we can gauge from the tumult that is so swiftly to shatter all hopes of reconciliation. That maddened crowd, throwing dust into the air, clutching at St Paul until the Roman soldiers have to close round him and carry him along in their arms, with their vicious scream, 'Away with such a fellow from the earth: it is not fit that he should live!'—these are the forces that he is to face.

And, at such a moment of heat, of frenzy, how queer it sounds to hear of the device by which, as the Apostles trust, all may yet go well! How is it that they can expect to keep under all this tempest by St Paul being at charges for four men, that they may shave their heads? And what is the value of this policy by which the crisis is to be met—the policy of commanding the Gentiles to abstain from eating the flesh of an animal that has been strangled, and from buying any meat in the market with the blood still in it?

All through the Acts this is our puzzle. The actual conflict always turns on this question of meats. In the matter of Cornelius, the Jerusalem Christians are troubled, not at Peter baptizing Gentiles, but at his going in and eating with them. And if we turn to the Galatians to expound the Acts, we find once more that the burning hour at Antioch, when Paul, in his indignation, found himself carried to the point of rebuking Peter, was hot with the same quarrel.

2. This plain narrative of facts agrees absolutely with all our human history, our human experience. That is just the way things always do happen. Always great historic quarrels take place over what seem to be trivial points. But no one is really quarrelling over the insignificant detail.

If we had dropped down upon England and seen the Midlands full of trained bands drilling, and the curse of civil war flaming out over fair fields of England, and had asked the reason, and been told, 'It is because Mr Hampden has refused to pay ship-money,' would we have begun to scold, and to say, 'Why kill each other over a few shillings?' If so, we would only have shown our profound ignorance of the realities of the situation. The writer of the Acts understands far better the normal experience of history. He knows that two opposing theories may conflict indefinitely without provoking an explosion, until they are brought to book, as it were, by some positive bit of actual practice. It is when the electrical currents are touched, are traversed by some practical shock, that the explosive violence of the energies at work is revealed.

So it always has been; so it was with this terrible rupture in the Early Church. And the particular practical details over which the collision concentrated itself were, in this case, peculiarly liable to kindle passion. For they were matters of social habit, affecting the private, intimate, domestic life at every turn. It was no battle of the schools; no controversy of angry theologians. It was something which

threw every house, every family, into confusion. And in the case of the Jew, the clinging to peculiar social customs, this distinction of clean and unclean flesh, the method of killing his meat, had gained a unique emphasis from the situation in which he stood. Thrown down as he was amid hordes of mingled nations, without king or country, these customs of his constituted for him his nationality, his separate existence. They preserved the type. They built up a frontier for him against the flood of unstable peoples.

And, besides, as he compared his own domestic habits with the Gentile customs around him, he felt them to be justified. What a clean, sweet, orderly domestic life he had secured, in contrast with the loose recklessness so typical of the Gentiles! These careless feasts of theirs, without rule or principle, round idol-temples, had that about them which made it obviously natural to class them in the same category as fornication. And, more than all, these habits of his not only carried with them all the passion of his national patriotism, but also they were charged with religious sanction. The Jew had been taught through these the wonderful truth that the whole scheme of his life was under God's eye, subject to God's ruling. The Law of his God followed him into every recess, and stamped itself on his dress and on his food. And all this now concentrated itself specially on his meals, for so much of his legal and ritual and social law had become an impossibility in his scattered exile that it was only within the sanctuary of the home that he could still preserve his ancient use, and assert his national identity.

3. Indeed, the problem was horribly difficult. It was not the simple question of converting Gentiles to the faith which was the difficulty. Every prophecy of the Messiah had foretold the incoming of the Gentiles. So far it was all plain sailing. But what was to be the position of these Gentiles after they had been admitted? Was not the love-feast, wherein all shared a common meal, the very symbol of their identity in Christ Jesus with one another? There must be some way of sitting down together; there must be a common rule regulating food. At Jerusalem, where practically the entire mass of believers were Jews, no question need arise. But at Antioch the problem must be solved how Jew and Gentile could meet and eat together. And it was for that mixed situation that the compromise of the first council was formed. The Church forbore to require circumcision; but it did demand of the Gentile section that it should conform so far to the Mosaic habits in matters of food as to make it tolerable for their Jewish brethren to sit at table with them without disgust. Courtesy, expediency, justified this compromise in mixed churches.

But, as Paul's work opened out, the problem widened. What of the churches where the believers were practically all Gentiles? Were they to submit to the old rules? It was here that Paul became vehement. If certain ways of eating offend a brother he would do anything rather than shock him; but if the rules were imposed as obligatory on Gentiles as such, then the first principles of the gospel seemed to be set at nought. For it implied that the privilege of race still survived, which was to offend against the Cross. In the Cross all these racial distinctions had vanished away. Now the Gentile was to come near, in his own person, moulded by his own history; not abandoning his Gentilism, but bringing it with him for transfiguration by the Spirit.

4. Are these disputes of the Acts very remote from us of to-day? Do they not embody a lesson that we have to face more directly and widely than any other nation on the face of the earth—the lesson of *the equality of races*. Always that question is before us. The Englishman goes everywhere; he plants himself down in the midst of every race; whatever their colour, he rubs shoulders with them all. And he has excellent capacities for managing, controlling, ruling them. But is there anybody who has greater difficulty than he in getting at their minds, in accepting their ideas? He carries England with him; he is exactly the same abroad as he is at home. He rings himself about with English habits, English interests, English games. A great strength there is in this sturdy independence; just as there was, and is, an unconquerable strength in the Jew's unchanging hold on his national distinctions and habits. Only it lays the Englishman open to the same temptations as those to which the Jew succumbed. Does he not, like the Jew, assume that he must always know best what is good for these people? Does he not measure

their advance by their willingness to adopt his ways, his habits of mind, his meats and drinks and dress? Can he consider their native aspirations to be as real, as interesting, as sacred, as those which have made England free to do what she will with her own life here at home? Not that there is identity or equality of gifts. These, of course, vary; some have a higher task, and some a lower; some are early in the field, and some are later. But their equal claim to their own natural modes of life, to their own habits of expression, to their own freedom of growth—that is what an Englishman cannot believe of races that are not of his own colour. Yet this is the mystery of Jesus.

¶ We want the East to keep its own soul—only thus can it be creative. We will put our civilization and our ecclesiastical systems at the disposal of India to take as much as may suit their purposes. But we do not insist upon these. We will give them Christ, and urge them to interpret Him through their own genius and life. . . . As to the manner and spirit of the interpretation, we should consider it of the highest importance that the penetrating statement of Tagore should be kept in mind, that 'when missionaries bring their truth to a strange land, unless they bring it in the form of homage it is not accepted and should not be. The manner of offering it to you must not be at all discordant with your own national thought and your self-respect.'[1]

And is it only men of another colour whom an Englishman mildly despises? Does a white foreigner fare much better at his hands? A foreigner's religion seems always to him a poor and childish affair. The Englishman moves about among even his own fellow-Christians abroad without a touch of brotherly sympathy. Their religious practices are, to him, only odd and silly and incomprehensible. He comes home and talks of Southern or Eastern Christians and it never seems to strike him that they in their way, and he in his, are both seeking pardon for their sins, and comfort in their pain, from the same Lord Jesus; and that their way may have been quite as good, and real, and effectual for them as his own for him. He never seems to feel an impulse to kneel down by their side, and let his prayers mingle with theirs, in a common fellowship.

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, 35.

But it is not only abroad that we have much to learn. Are there not whole classes of men shut off one from another by divergence of customs and manners, and meats and drinks? So hard it is to believe, not only that we ought to be kind and charitable to those not of our class, but that their ways of thinking, their wants, desires, aspirations, likings, count for as much as ours and are quite as likely to be right. That is what we cannot believe; that is what it takes a positive effort on our part to allow. And it is that effort which Christ calls upon us, and enables us, to make. He endows all that is human with worth, with sanctity. He compels us to accept the vast variety of ways by which human nature may choose to express itself. He justifies us in our own, but forbids us to override, or to condemn, any different instincts equally natural in others. He will, in His grace, draw class to class according to the measure with which He inspires each class to give equal respect to the others.

It is the same with individuals of a different type from ourselves. How harsh, how intolerant our judgments on character and on habits which happen to be the opposite of our own! The man of strong common sense cannot stand the man of imaginative emotion. The man of action despises thoroughly the man of thought. The man gifted with vigorous self-control has no mercy on that other, sensitive and unstrung, who is tossed hither and thither by gusty passion. 'Why does he not do as I do?'—that is the relentless comment on it all. If only we would say, 'He is my brother; and that nature, that character of his, which is to me so unintelligible, so perverse, so unattractive, is dear to Jesus Christ—just as dear as my own! In Jesus Christ there is no dull or clever, high or low, classes or masses; no distinction of persons. All are one thing in Christ Jesus.'

In Christ there is no East or West,
In Him no South or North,
But one great Fellowship of Love
Throughout the whole wide earth.

In Him shall true hearts everywhere
Their high communion find.
His service is the golden cord
Close-binding all mankind.

Join hands then, Brothers of the Faith,
Whate'er your race may be!—
Who serves my Father as a son
Is surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both East and West,
In Him meet South and North,
All Christly souls are one in Him,
Throughout the whole wide earth.[1]

Love and Reason

Acts xxi. 37.—'Canst thou speak Greek?'

On his return from his third mission St Paul visited the Temple to prove that he had not forgotten or disavowed the obligations of the Law. There he was recognized by some Asiatic Jews, who, seeing him in company with Trophimus, concluded that he had taken this man, an Ephesian Greek, into that part of the Temple courts where no Gentile might set foot. Instantly there arose a furious tumult; Paul was dragged out of the Temple, the gates were shut behind him, and he would have been killed then and there, had not 'the chief captain,' Lysias, who commanded the garrison, rescued the Apostle from the hands of the mob. Paul was being carried up the steps by the soldiers when he called to the tribune and requested leave to speak to him. The officer answered in great surprise, 'Canst thou speak Greek?'

He saw that he had to deal with one of those fierce religious quarrels which were not uncommon in Jerusalem, and which indeed he was posted there to prevent. And he concluded quite naturally that Paul was just one of those wild native fanatics who were always making trouble for the guardians of order, an ignorant man who could speak no language that civilized people could understand. It was therefore with no small wonder that he heard his prisoner address him in the most polished dialect of the then world. When he says, 'Canst thou speak Greek?' he means, What, an educated man, a gentleman, brawling in the midst of a mob like this? What can you have been thinking about? How can you have got here? Under his question lies the idea that religion must always be sensible, orderly, giving no offence to quiet respectable people, doing what others do. If it leads to any uproar in orderly sleepy places where everything was going smoothly and the authorities had no trouble, it must be to blame and it must be put down.

This was the real cause of the persecutions of the Early Church. Every now and then the pagans made a loud outcry against Christianity: if there was an earthquake or a famine, if a man who gained his living by selling beasts for sacrifice found his trade falling off, if his wife or children had been converted and would no longer do exactly what he wished. The government did not take the trouble to ask who made the complaints or why they made them. These Christians, they said, cannot speak Greek. They cannot have read the books of our wise men or they would feel how little they know. They ought to listen to those better instructed, and if they will not do so they must take the consequences. Thus the casual phrase of the chief captain opens up that most important question: What is the place of education in the religious life?

Paul tells the Corinthians that God has made the wisdom of this world foolish. Both Jews and Greeks had gone astray through the knowledge on which they plumed themselves. Our wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption is Christ Jesus. What he means is that education is not religion, nor will it make a man religious. Nothing but the love of God in Jesus Christ can do that. We must never forget this great truth for a single instant. But religion bears many beautiful fruits, and among the most beautiful is that of knowledge, and no good Christian can be content to remain ignorant of things that it much concerns him to learn. Think of duty. We shall be judged by our works, and our works are our duty. According as we have performed the work appointed for us in this life, we shall be good servants, or wicked and slothful servants. Now duty is sometimes quite simple and plain, but often it is not. In this complicated world it grows every day more complicated, calling more and more for reflection and a trained habit of thought. Justice, for instance, is one of the highest and one of the most difficult of duties. We are to give to every man his due. But what is his due? Many serious questions crowd in

[1] John Oxenham.

upon us there! Or take the Bible. That also is in great part quite simple and plain; but think of those questions that were raised at the Reformation, or those again which have been debated in our own days. These are not easy, yet how can we give a reason for our hope, as Peter tells us we ought always to be ready to do, if we do not even know what there is that requires to be explained? We ought never to forget the urgent duty of gathering wisdom from every field. If the love of Christ is firmly planted in the heart, all light is light from heaven. 'In thy light,' it is written, 'shall we see light'; and those who possess the Day-spring from on high shall lack no kind of illumination if they seek it where it may be found. All knowledge will help to make the man of God perfect, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing and explaining the word of truth. And it is through that deeper understanding of Scripture that we may hope to find a way out of our wretched dissensions. The Bible has one meaning, not a score of different meanings; and it is by patient, humble, charitable study, that we shall find out what that one meaning is.

Yet there is a danger. Religion is above all things a life, not a system to be defended or a creed that can be taught. These also religion makes, but they do not make religion. It is the love of a Person, a Divine form of that affection which we feel for our own dear ones upon earth. Now where there is life there must be the vigour, the freshness, and originality of life. You cannot bind it in forms and conventionalities; it breaks through all artificial barriers, giving itself freely and passionately—sometimes extravagantly. The Lord came to kindle a fire upon earth, and His Love ought to be like a fire. It impels the disciple, as it impelled his Master, to do strange things.

¶ In his essay on *The Psychology of Power* Captain Hadfield says of a certain type of religious teacher: 'In their dread of emotionalism and its consequences in conduct, they have attempted to abolish all emotion as a thing either dangerous or vulgar. In so doing they have failed to appreciate that the Christian religion is founded on an emotion—the all-embracing emotion of love. To rob the soul of emotion is to deprive it of its driving force and leave it lifeless.'

We ought all to be enthusiasts. But enthusiasm is an ambiguous word. It is a name for life; but it is also a name for every crank, or whim, or fanaticism that can lead men astray. Now education is a disciplined, temperate spirit. It aims at making everybody think and act prudently, coolly, and after the same fashion. It dislikes enthusiasm when it is wrong so greatly that it has often endeavoured to quench enthusiasm when it is right. That was what the chief captain meant when he said, 'Canst thou speak Greek?' Are you one of the enlightened, of the superior, and can you care for these ignorant Jews? So it was that many misjudged the Salvation Army because they occasionally said and did extravagant things, and did not see that they had a zeal for Christ and for the Holy Spirit and for the souls of the outcast and poor, which shone like a bright light in a too reasonable age.

We ought to be enthusiastic, yet critical; warm and eager in heart, yet sane and cool in judgment, holding fast to the tried and precious rules which have made so many saints, yet looking forward hopefully to the future like some grey-bearded, experienced general who encourages, yet regulates the high spirit of his young soldiers. It sounds almost like a paradox that we should be at once so ardent and so cool. But this is Wisdom, the highest gift of the Holy Spirit, the union of Love and Reason, the very mind of Christ Himself.

¶ There is danger in being fractionally religious. No man really finds God until he seeks Him with his whole nature. Some persons are sentimentally believers and mentally sceptics; they stand at the door of the sanctuary with their hearts in and their heads out. Writing as an old man, Coleridge said of his youth, 'My head was with Spinoza, though my whole heart remained with Paul and John.' An unreasoning faith is sure to end in folly; it is a mind all fire without fuel. A true religious experience, like a coral island, requires both warmth and light in which to rise. An unintelligent belief is in constant danger of being shattered. Hardy, in sketching the character of Alec D'Urberville, explains the eclipse of his faith by saying, 'Reason had had nothing to do with his conversion, and the drop of logic that Tess had let fall into the sea of his enthusiasm served to chill its effervescence to stagnation.'[1]

[1] H. S. Coffin, *Some Christian Convictions*, 27.

Citizenship

Acts xxi. 39.—'A citizen of no mean city.'

1. Citizen(ship) is a word frequently found in the letters and speeches of St Paul, and one to which he attached peculiar importance. The circumstances of his life perhaps caused the word to be a favourite of his. Let us see what these were, and how he came to employ the figure so often. He virtually describes his own citizenship as threefold.

(1) *Municipal.*—'I am a citizen of no mean city.' What had been his experience in early days as an inhabitant of Tarsus? He was in a city near the sea-coast, the capital of the province of Cilicia; he would wander down to the banks of the river Cydnus and watch its swift waters flowing by, icy cold with the melted snow of the great Mount Taurus close at hand. The province of Cilicia was at this time under a Roman governor; he would therefore be accustomed to the sight of Roman officials, and perhaps Roman soldiers, about the streets of the city. Its population was largely cosmopolitan, and it was one of the great trading cities of the world. But it was not as a wealthy town that Tarsus was celebrated. It had a more honourable claim as the chief University of Asia. It was really a Greek city, and Greek culture and Greek thought had told their tale upon the life and character of the leading classes of the people. The historian Strabo says that in all that relates to philosophy and general education Tarsus was more illustrious than Athens or Alexandria. We can well understand what intellectual affinities the thoughtful young student, Saul of Tarsus, found in the literary and philosophical atmosphere of his native city. Well might Paul, therefore, speak of it with pride.

¶ The Roman governor, on hearing himself addressed in good Greek, expresses astonishment. He thought he had caught one of the Reds. 'Can you speak Greek?' he asks him. 'I am from Tarsus,' says the prisoner, 'a citizen of no mean city.' Now, if we were to turn to Euripides and look at the opening of the play of 'Ion,' we would find a scene in which, in referring to Athens, he introduces the reference to the city, in which the play was actually being performed, in the words, 'There is no "mean city of the Greeks,"' using the very language which St Paul applies to Tarsus. It was as if St Paul had said, 'Can I speak Greek? I am from Tarsus, and Tarsus is a second Athens.' It was something like saying, 'I'm from Boston.'[1]

Sentiment, though it has nothing tangible about it, has a great influence on human affairs. Affection for a place, pride in its progress, sorrow for its decline, seem to be implanted in men's hearts, and those who disregard it have to reckon with one of the strongest forces of human nature.

¶ His attachment to the Holy Land induced him to put on for the Sabbath day a ring, engraved with the word 'Jerusalem,' and to keep under his pillow a stone from Jerusalem bearing the inscription, 'For thy servants take pleasure in her stones and favour the dust thereof.'[2]

(2) *Imperial.*—Wherever he went Paul was able to claim, further, that he was a free-born Roman citizen, and here we have the idea of citizenship involving privilege. He was under the direct protection of the great State which ruled the world. The very honour of Rome was involved in the protection of Paul the Roman citizen. When an attempt against his life was made at Jerusalem, the Roman officer protected him with a strong military force, not perhaps for his own sake, but because it would have been a stain on Rome if a citizen's life had been allowed to be lost by the violence of the subjects of the Empire. Paul was a privileged person. He could not be treated as a slave who had no rights, or as a provincial who was subject to the caprice of the local governor. No one could punish him without trial, no officer could inflict on him a degrading penalty, no one could condemn him till his cause had been before the highest tribunal on earth. Here is something tangible. We do not all of us realize what we owe to the State as citizens or the privilege and protection we enjoy. So certain are we that we are defended by the State that we go about our business without realizing what it would be if once that protection were withdrawn, or how great the anarchy, confusion, and misery would be were the vigilance of the State to become relaxed. That we can leave our houses in the morning, and return to find them safe and our families unmolested; that we can cross

[1] Rendel Harris.
[2] Paul Goodman, *Moses Montefiore*, 215.

the commons on a dark evening unarmed and without fear; that we can conduct our ordinary business with confidence, are matters of course to us; but the time is not so remote when this was by no means the case. This and a great deal more we owe to our privilege of being citizens of the country to which we belong—a debt which should surely inspire gratitude and a deep sense of obligation.

(3) *Racial.*—As a Tarsian and a Roman, citizenship meant much to Paul, but how much more as an Israelite! He tells the High Priest that he had lived the life of a good citizen of Israel 'in all good conscience before God' from his youth. This third citizenship was only partly by birth, for to be a full citizen of Israel a man had to be submitted to a solemn and ancient rite; and so Paul says not only that he was of the tribe of Benjamin, but that he was circumcised on the eighth day. Here, then, is a citizenship implying responsibilities. To be one of the people whom Jehovah had chosen to make known His will, to have kinship with all the saints and heroes of the Old Testament, and to know God's law, to have been instructed in the knowledge of the One True and Living God—these are privileges indeed. But in addition to this the citizen of Israel felt the responsibility of upholding all the causes of pride and privilege he had received, and he was conscious that on his own life and conduct the honour of his people was in part dependent. To him to be a good citizen was a matter of conscience, and therefore Paul tells the Sanhedrin that his Israelite citizenship had been exercised, as in the sight of God, 'in all good conscience.'

2. Let us try and see how it was that Paul was so impressed by the idea of citizenship. We do not find much trace of it in the Old Testament for two reasons—the tone is almost entirely Oriental, and in the Old Testament the individual plays a comparatively insignificant part.

In the East the idea of government has always been despotic. One must rule—whether in family, tribe, or nation. Thus the idea of a perfect government is always throughout the Old Testament that of a single ruler. The perfect State was to be realized when 'a king should rule in righteousness.' This underlies the Messianic expectation. In King Messiah, Israel would have a triumphant leader and an absolutely just ruler. This method of thought is due in part to the difficulty Orientals have in thinking of men as individuals. A man's personality is lost in that of his family, tribe, or nation, as represented by its head. We see this even in the prophets of Israel, who denounce not so much the individual as the nation. 'Ah, sinful nation,' says Isaiah, 'a people laden with iniquity,' etc. It is to Greece, not to Israel, that we must look for the idea of citizenship. In the little States which this wonderful people founded we have almost every type of government, but as a rule the individual counted for a great deal more than he did in the East.

Inspired by the teaching of our Lord, who made the training of the individual a matter of the first importance, Paul seems to have imported the idea of citizenship into Christian life. In Christ he saw the King; in the Christian people a State not of featureless subjects, but of free citizens possessed of separate individualities, yet as closely knit to their King as the members of the body are to the head. The State to which Christians belong, he tells the Philippians, is 'in the heavens'; and elsewhere he speaks of the Christians being fellow-citizens of the saints in light, uniting all in one great State of which Christ is the Head, but retaining the true idea of citizenship, where each man has his place, his duties, his functions, and his individualities. From this Pauline idea we derive the thought which has so greatly influenced all Christian people, namely, that on earth and in heaven there is a great Christian nation united to its Head and Master Jesus Christ, and that in all the changes of this fleeting world this remains the one indestructible State.

3. The last thoughts concerning citizenship we might ponder are those indicated by the Apostle, the citizen of Tarsus, Rome, and Israel. Is the sentiment of pride which animates us as Englishmen completely justified? To the eye, indeed, we are citizens of no mean city, but of the greatest country on earth—great in its past, great in its present, great in its opportunities. But when we look below the surface can we be equally satisfied? With a moral decay showing itself on all sides, with the insane pursuit of pleasure obscuring all idea of duty, with an unwillingness to do good and thorough work, and a strong desire to escape the duties of the home, the family, and the State, much remains

to be accomplished before we can call ourselves citizens of no mean city.

¶ 'He best serves the State,' Epictetus said many centuries ago, 'who raises not the roofs of its houses but the souls of its citizens.' 'Public life,' Edmund Burke declared, 'is a situation of power and energy; he trespasses upon his duty who sleeps upon his watch as well as he that goes over to the enemy.' 'That which put Glory of Grace into all that he did,' wrote Bunyan of one of his heroes, 'was that he did it out of pure love to his country.'[1]

Or can we truly boast of our world-wide Empire till we are animated by a truly Imperial spirit? Is this generation really prepared to make great sacrifices of comfort, ease, wealth, to maintain the honour of the world-wide dominion it has inherited? Is it ready to accept the burdens of Empire, not for the sake of trade and profit, but for the benefit of the world? Is it, in a word, prepared to pay for great privileges the price of self-sacrifice, self-discipline, and self-surrender?

¶ The poet Cowper saw in the rapid growth of England's power, even in his day, the earnest of a world-wide rule far eclipsing that of Rome. You remember how he pictures 'the British warrior-queen,' who has suffered direct indignity at the hands of the Roman conquerors, consulting 'the Druid, hoary chief,' as to her country's wrongs, and listening to the 'burning words' in which he portrayed, not only the destined fall of Rome, but also the future glory of her own land. Cowper was a patriot as well as a poet, jealous of England's liberties, conscious of England's destiny, anxious for England's good, and in 'Boadicea' he claims that all who bear the name of Briton are inheritors of a more than Roman empire, and (let us not forget) of a more than Roman responsibility.[2]

Finally, we must remember that we are, as followers of Christ, citizens of the Israel which He has redeemed and over which He reigns as Head. Are we prepared to accept the responsibility which this involves—namely, that of Christian men setting the standard of life, thought, and action by that of the Master living on earth, as those that seek a country that is a heavenly State, striving to be worthy to be partakers with the saints in light?

[1] A. Smellie, *In the Secret Place*, 196.
[2] T. W. Drury.

The Fascination of the King

Acts xxii. 8.—'Who art thou, Lord?'

1. It required a strong force of conviction to bring Saul of Tarsus to acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ, for it meant a mighty breaking with the accepted principle of his life. But in his arrest on the Damascus road he was gripped by the fascination of the King. There can be no doubt of Saul's loyalty to the King—the King who was expected by the Jews, the Promised Saviour of the nation. His strenuous endeavours against the heretics were evidence of a strong personal loyalty. For this reason his surprise was great when the kingly influence arrested him on the way to Damascus. When we think of it, there is no wonder that he was surprised. What he expected and what happened were so different. We know something of the traditional expectation with regard to the style and manner of the king who was to set all things right. He was to be a greater than David—a greater than Solomon.

There was another conception of kingship prevalent at the time—the conception against which Saul was fighting. Once there had come into the city of Jerusalem One who was met by a welcoming throng of ignorant folk who proclaimed Him King. 'Hosannah; Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord,' they cried. This man did not even accept that welcome as it was meant. He seemed to correct it, or direct the enthusiasm in a strange way.

Jesus knew of the glamour which encircles the person of a king, and how superficial and fleeting it is, and He had long ago set aside as unworthy the attraction of world-empire. Matthew tells us the significant fact that it was the plaudits of the children that Jesus received with gladness. Those people whom Saul was persecuting held to the opinion that this man, Jesus, was the promised King. Yet Jesus had refused all the signs of kinghood which might be expected, and He ran counter to all the accepted notions of what a king should be. At the same time, there seemed to be some strange fascination about the man, for even the threat of death could not drive out the pestilential heresy. Assuredly it was no superficial influence but a deeply seated conviction which held the hearts of those whom

Saul persecuted. It was irritating because so futile, yet it had him intrigued.

2. Now on the road to Damascus he began to discover what it all meant. He found himself within the magnetic field of a commanding personality. He realized that the influence which led the heretics to their folly was no superficial sensation but a transforming force which affected body and soul. He himself was not a man to be lightly moved. His training had seen to that. The riverside quay at Tarsus, with its variety of strange craft from distant lands, had fired his youthful mind with the thought of adventure. The advent of learned men to visit the Stoics in the city had added to his conception of the wonder of the world. He had assimilated the intellectual culture of his own nation under Gamaliel. His was a *mind* that would always seek to have an ordered idea of the course of life, and he had received every encouragement to believe that he possessed such a view of the world. Yet he was forced to confess that here was a fact which would not range itself alongside others in his world-system. Here was a force which was proving to be a disruptive influence.

Saul had also his pride as a Roman citizen, the symbol of the power that could do things. Only one who was fascinated by the ability to overcome practical difficulties could have faced the privations of his many travels in those days. Read the story of his journeying with that thought, and you find much to illustrate his pride in practical work. There was Elymas at the Court of Sergius Paulus, whom he withstood to the face, achieving a practical victory which would increase his manly self-respect. There were the people of Lystra, to whom he spoke in their own spiritual language, touching on their agricultural troubles, and whom he brought to the knowledge of the true God. The incident at Athens was a gallant attempt to meet the strange people of that city on their own ground. He tried to make an appeal to the prevailing sentiment of the time and place. He had a practical outlook on life which revealed a strong and determined will. He limited his purpose only by the boundaries of the known world. Right to the Pillars of Hercules he would have gone. 'Whensoever I take my journey into Spain,' he says, in writing to the Church at Rome.

It was such a *will* that was gripped by the new power and compelled to direct itself anew. His invincible determination was informed by the new idea of life and turned from the ways of persecution to salvation.

We cannot disregard a third element in Paul's character, which seems to balance the others. There was a depth of *feeling* in him which from time to time reveals itself in speech and action. There was a fervour about his activity which told of an inner fire burning, and revealed a warmth of feeling not generally associated with the intellectual eminence which he showed. His forceful way of dealing with adversaries is but one evidence of the manner in which he made a cause his own and saw in its success or failure his own life or death. We see the extent to which this emotional nature of his was gripped by the new experience, as he has caught the transforming vision on the road to Damascus.

Here we have a man, intellectual, practical, emotional, to a remarkable degree. He himself declares that he had all that the world could give him of endowments. 'If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.' Yet, such was the mighty transformation, these he counted loss for Christ. It is characteristic of the man that he at once recognized in the power that arrested him not an idea, or a law, or a feeling, but a Person—the only power which can command one who himself is a thinking, willing, and feeling personality. Paul admitted that he had found Him whom he must obey.

¶ The famous Chinese Christian, Pastor Hsi—one of the greatest, if not the greatest Christian since Paul—whose labours in China were so beneficent, was before his conversion to Christianity a scholar and a man of influence. One day a New Testament was given to him, and he went to his room to read it. He was so fascinated that he fell on his knees still reading. Then as he read he became aware of a strange mystical power around him. It was a sense of the overpowering presence of Christ. Suddenly in a moment of transcendent faith he exclaimed, 'He has enthralled me, and I am His for ever.'[1]

3. It is such an arrest that the men and women of to-day need. There is no doubt that our feelings are very susceptible to the appeal

[1] D. B. Knox.

of a good life, our thought to the lure of truth, our will to the call of justice, but that is not enough. There is for all of us the need of conversion, that is to say, of the turning round of all our good qualities to face the King of Life. We require to own allegiance to One who can bind together every faculty of our nature to one active endeavour. Until we have achieved that state we have not yet discovered what life means.

(1) There are some whose enthusiasm is easily stirred, and whose feeling leads them to give themselves wholly wherever their interest is held. In what a number of things we have been interested during our lifetime! How we exhausted ourselves in advancing them, and now we have become cold. This is a condition we are all bound to reach if we are merely inspired by causes and led on by interest. Causes have a tendency to cease to inspire. The only perpetual inspiration is through a person. A soul which lives by the fire of a personal enthusiasm is possessed of continual renewal as an inherent principle of its own life. To this end friendship was given; for this great men have arisen to call forth the hero-worship of the ages. Personal allegiance is the thing which keeps us alive spiritually in this world of ours and it is only the small-minded who miss it. Inevitably to all the healthy-minded there comes in some shape or form the relationship which means for them the opportunity of comfort and soul renewal. Some require it more than others, but normal humanity lives thereby. Let us seek in Christ the centre of our enthusiasm and the possibilities of life are increased a thousandfold. It is the experience of all who have come to Him that He has transformed the internal fires of their life and has added to their interest in all things. We need only to approach Him, and we shall rediscover, or discover for the first time, the fascination of His service.

¶ Ideas are often poor ghosts; our sun-filled eyes cannot discern them; they pass athwart us in thin vapour, and cannot make themselves felt. But sometimes they are made flesh; they breathe upon us with warm breath, they touch us with soft responsive hands, they look at us with sad sincere eyes, and speak to us in appealing tones; they are clothed in a living human soul, with all its conflicts, its faith, and its love. Then their presence is a power, then they shake us like a passion, and we are drawn after them with gentle compulsion, as flame is drawn to flame.[1]

¶ One of Germany's foremost theologians in the nineteenth century was Friedrich Tholuck, Professor of Theology at Halle. He had a notable influence over young men, and his personal relations with his students instilled evangelical fervour into many successive generations. The secret of his life—so far-reaching in its influence—he once explained in a single sentence: 'I have but one passion, and that is Christ.'

(2) There are some of us whose passion is for truth. We seek a reasoned understanding of the world. Truth, however, is not something apart from ourselves. It is not obtained merely by holding the mirror up to nature; it comes to us when we bring our personality into relationship with the rest of life. Scientific truth is but the coin by which we pay our personal dues to life. We must live the truth before we really know it. Let us consider how truth has come to mankind. There has been much plodding effort, much careful calculation; but the truth has come in a flash to some inspired soul, and the plodders have applied it, testing its validity. We see this in the case of the truth of life revealed by the artist. The fascination of real art consists in the fact that it is a revelation of truth, an expression of insight, the manifestation of inspiration. The actual effort of painting may be measured in time, but the coming of the truth was timeless. Abt Vogler speaks of the truth of the musician, the building up of the chord thus:

> But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
> Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they are!

It makes all the difference in the world to the thinker if he can go forth into the adventure for truth with the assurance that on the way he will be arrested by the sudden flash of understanding, the illumination of eternal things. Such an experience transforms our entire outlook. We are brought to see that truth comes to us as to personalities, and we will never enter fully into the confidence it brings unless we can feel that we are inspired by a personal influence. It is the experience of men and women who have

[1] George Eliot, *Janet's Repentance.*

trusted in Christ that He has met them on the way to truth, and has revealed to them mysteries hitherto sealed. He has given them such a grasp of the meaning of life as was before impossible, and He has added to their interest a fascination unspeakable. They feel that they are now laying hold upon truth on its eternal side, freed from the limitations of passing opinion.

The clamant need of the soul is for some power to dwell within and direct our activities, a power greater than ourselves and yet one which becomes as our own. Who is there in earnest with life who has not felt the need of this? Here is the most cherished secret of the Christian life. In the hour of sacred approach, when we submit ourselves to the presence of the Divine, the miracle is performed. We rise in strength who knelt in weakness, we go forth informed and gathered together in spirit who came in indecision. The true power of will comes only to those who pray for the presence of the King of Life and surrender themselves to His fascination.

The Cost of Progress

Acts xxii. 28.—'With a great sum obtained I this freedom.'

The word translated 'freedom' in the text is 'citizenship' in the original, and it means the freedom of the city of Rome, implying the possession and enjoyment of those peculiar rights and privileges which belonged to Roman citizenship.

The Roman captain said that he had bought his citizenship for a great sum of money. It was purchasable, then, and formed, no doubt, an important source of revenue. St Paul said that he had been born into it, that the noblest civic franchise the world knew was in his case a birthright transmitted from ancestral days. But both the soldier and the Apostle possessed and enjoyed privileges for which they had paid nothing, which the struggles and fidelities of other men, and generations of men, had purchased for them.

There are certain things in life which cannot be bought for us; we must go and buy them for ourselves; they can be won only by our personal striving and toil. But over against the gifts which we obtain for ourselves by individual effort there stands a vast range of gifts into which we are born. We inherit them; they are free gifts of Providence; we possess them because men in other days and ages bought them for us, and at a great price. Many of the things which mean to us safety, gain, ease, comfort, and enjoyment meant to those who went before us toil, conflict, suffering, and sacrifice. 'Ye are bought with a price' is true of civilization and moral freedom, no less than of the Christian redemption.

Let us stir up our minds and hearts by way of remembrance, so that the holy spirit of gratitude and the sense of obligation may take possession of our souls.

1. Think of the toil and struggle which have been necessary to bring man to where, and to what, he is to-day. The blessing, for example, of living in this twentieth century—do we ever think what it has cost? Men are but little aware at how great a price emancipation from barbarism has been purchased for them, and they but faintly realize what has been paid for the simplest utilities of civilization.

What man was at the beginning it is not easy to say. We must, in a large measure, substitute speculation and guess for knowledge, but as far as we can go back we find less and less valid ground for Bishop South's famous declaration that 'Aristotle was the rubbish of an Adam and Athens the ruins of a Paradise': we find society more and more primitive, and man, as man, less and less developed. The men of our age and country are like another race when compared with their remote ancestors, who dwelt in caves and dens of the earth, and fought the beasts for possession. Primitive barbarism had to be lived through, and if men in far-distant times had not done that rude and wild work, the fierce struggle would have devolved upon us.

¶ Plutarch gives us this picture of a man of the earlier period addressing the men of a later age: 'Oh, how you are cherished of the gods, you who live now! How fortunate is your time! All Nature is engaged in giving you delights. But our birth-time was mournful and barren. The world was so new that we were in want of everything. The air was not pure, the sun was obscured, the rivers overflowed their banks, all was marsh and thicket and forest; our misery was extreme; we had neither inventions nor inventors; we were cold

and naked; our life was trouble and sorrow.' Our early forefathers

Perished in winter winds till one smote fire
From flint stones coldly hiding what they held—
The red spark treasured from the kindling sun;
They gorged on flesh like wolves till one sowed corn,
Which grew a weed, yet makes the life of man.

The sceptre of the earth was given, we read, to man at the beginning; but, like all God's best gifts, this gift of kingship was not bestowed right away and once for all. It had to be won. Humanity had its cross and passion before it touched even the crown of material dominion. The familiar phrases, 'the survival of the fittest,' 'the struggle for existence,' indicate the law whereby good has come out of evil, the higher out of the lower; whereby hardship and suffering have been converted into the instruments of a beneficent purpose, whereby the race has moved upward from darkness to light, from weakness to strength, from light to more light, and from strength to more strength. Every step forward has been taken under the stimulus of pain. The arts of civilization were not supernaturally revealed. Necessity was the mother of invention. It was by sore experience man learned the laws of his physical, social, moral being and well-being, and gained all his wisdom. What we know to-day as social morality took long ages to develop, and it developed in obedience to great and pressing human needs. It represents the collective wisdom of mankind—wisdom taught chiefly by experience. Amid fightings within and without—in blood and tears—the children of men found out that self-control and self-sacrifice were good, that brotherliness was better than strife, truth than falsehood, honesty than theft. The moral sentiments are qualities, if not natural and human in their origin, certainly so in their development. They have a natural history in the race.

With a great sum have all the blessings of civilization been obtained. The principle or law of life which we see perfectly exemplified in the Cross of Christ flashes its revealing light all along the pathway of human history. The central fact of historical Christianity is the interpretation and transfiguration of the inmost fact of life. Redemption through sacrifice lies at the centre and heart of the whole process of human development. To secure even slight reforms thousands have toiled and suffered. To make one single fact of social science credible many martyrdoms have been necessary. What incalculable strivings and sufferings are represented, for instance, in the simple right to vote at an election! We boast of our political freedom. But how little of it is due to the efforts of one generation. It is a great inheritance, which bears the mark of the heroism and sacrifice of many generations.

What a price has also been paid for all the safeguards of our civilization, for our securities against storm, pestilence, and disease, for our utilities and comforts! The records of discovery and invention are written in letters of blood. Steam and electricity have not been brought to serve man as they now do without frightful accidents and disasters, and the loss of many precious lives in the experiments which led the way to the final success. Nearly all the good things which we take as a matter of course have come to us only because countless lives have bought them for us.

¶ The *Times* recently bore a London despatch carrying the news of the death of Dr John Francis Hall-Edwards, one of the first to follow in the path of Röntgen, the discoverer of the X-ray. After the original discovery of 1896 he began his experiments and immediately contracted dermatitis caused by X-rays burns. The malady became so severe that it necessitated amputation of his left arm and the greater part of his right hand. But this did not prevent his further experimentation. Despite his crippled state he was an officer in the Imperial Forces in the War, rendering distinguished service in the war hospitals in France and England, and in 1922 he was awarded a Carnegie hero medal—one of the many who have entered into the fellowship of those who live in broken bodies for the redemption of the race.[1]

In the business world is there anything we possess and enjoy to-day of which we can honestly say that it is ours alone? The successful business man who imagines that it is due to his ability, smartness, and perseverance that he has amassed wealth and won distinction forgets that it has taken hundreds and thousands

[1] G. Stewart, *The Crucifixion in our Street*, 76.

of years of human effort, struggle, and invention to create for him the opportunity to follow his business, and to make what he calls his fortune.

¶ A designer at work in one of our public manufactories was asked by one who watched him, 'How long have you been learning to do that?' The man replied: 'Six hundred years, for so long ago did the first of us begin to design, and we have been at it ever since.'

2. With a great price obtained we this freedom—our intellectual blessings, our science and art, and all our agencies of culture. One of the most wonderful things ever accomplished by man was the invention of the alphabet. It must have taken the race thousands of years to learn the art of expressing thought and feeling in word-symbols, and many of us accept the gift so dearly won without any thought of its cost—of the long process of development of which it is the result.

They mowed and babbled till some tongue struck speech,
And patient fingers framed the lettered sound:
What good gift have my brothers, but it came
From search and strife, and painful sacrifice?

Our habits of mind, our instincts, intuitions, traditions, the laws and principles which now seem part of the substance of our intellectual being, the thoughts which are the mental atmosphere we breathe were once dim ideas blindly groped after, faint impressions, fugitive insights, fitful gleams of perception breaking through dense clouds. The civilized sciences, like the civilized races, had their barbarous ancestry—chemistry its alchemy, astronomy its astrology—without which they could not have been. All great discoveries have come slowly and painfully; and the sure and settled knowledge of this modern age has been made possible by all the mistakes, delusions, half-truths, broken lights, and rejected theories of yesterday.

¶ In a conversation with his friend Eckerman, Goethe has told what his sentences cost him in gold; but really his genius and culture cost all history and knowledge and art, all Egypt and India, all Greece and Italy, all the movements of mediæval life, all the experience of antecedent ages, and all the laws and habits of civilization. But for the labours of many ages and many peoples the man Goethe and his work would not have been possible.

Men are but little aware of the price of what is called literature—of the long discipline and education of mind and heart and soul which lie behind it. We find in it valuable lessons without paying for them the price of pain which was necessary to purchase the original experience. Out of what countless struggles of soul and experiments in living have come the ideals which are the charm of the literature which reflects and interprets our best life! It has taken all the experience and culture of the race to produce the large observation, the delicacy of sentiment, the wealth of imagination, the refined and elevated thought which impress and delight us in the books we read. How much of all that is saddest and sweetest, of all that is most terrible and most lovely in human life has gone to the making of a little library. Our best books are not the isolated and original productions of their authors, but the fruit of the intellectual and moral strivings of many generations. Upon them there is the invisible pressure of all history. They are full of

Words which have drunk transcendent meaning up
From the best passions of the bygone times;
Steeped through with tears of triumph and remorse,
Sweet with all sainthood, cleansed with martyr fires.

3. What is true of our learning and culture is even more true of our religion. Because other men bowed down before serpents and stones and powers of earth and air, and found out by sorrowful experience the inadequacy of all such adoration, it is possible for us to join every week in the worship of the one God from whom, to whom, and in whom are all things. To our truer, larger, and lovelier faith, all the aspirations and prayers, the fears and hopes, the credulities and questionings, the errors and truths of the past have contributed something. It has cost many a groan to make possible the sweetness and gladness of our hymns: ages of agonizing fear and noble daring, of exceeding sorrowfulness even unto death, to make Jesus Christ, and all that Jesus Christ stands for, the centre of the religious thought and life of the

world—Infinite Justice, Mercy, Goodness, and Fatherhood, our highest revelation of God.

The history of religion is just the history of human growth. What we describe as revelation is not an act but a process. It is by the slow and gradual purifying and deepening of the mind and heart that the character of man is prepared to receive new light and life. The spiritual and Divine realities were the same yesterday as to-day, but man had to grow into their knowledge. The great Christian truths could not be revealed *to* him till they were revealed *in* him—till his life took on what we now call the Christian quality and aspect.

The Saviour of men called His word or message 'seed,' and the meaning which lies in that simple figure is the explanation of the crude theories and errors of the Christian centuries, and of the fact that we to-day stand, or may stand, so much nearer Christ. And that we have clearer light and better understanding of the Christian ideas and Christian spirit; that we can think more justly and generously of our God, and deem no trust in Him too great, and no hope too good to be true—all this vast blessing has been obtained for us at a tremendous price. It is ours because men of other days were willing to be misunderstood, to stand alone, to sacrifice worldly interests and prospects, to put far from them comfort and peace of life, in order to be true to their convictions and ideals, and help on the Church and the world.

The days when suffering and loss, personal defeat and failure, were necessary to progress and victory are not far distant. They have not even passed away. We have but to make ourselves familiar with the life and work of Maurice, Robertson, Colenso, Lynch, and Baldwin Brown in England, with John Macleod Campbell, Robert Lee, and Robertson Smith in Scotland, with Hosea Ballou, Theodore Parker, and Horace Bushnell in America, to discover what it has cost noble religious teachers in recent times to declare the mind and will of God.

4. If these things are so, what is our duty? Surely it is this, that much is required from those to whom much is given. It is not enough that we congratulate ourselves on our birth-privileges and rejoice in our heritage of blessing. Our gifts and opportunities bring with them serious obligations. Great historic gains have been lost through unfaithfulness and failure. Palfrey tells us in his *History of New England* that the forty years of noble life in the first age of New England were followed by forty years of very ignoble life. After the Pilgrim Fathers there grew up a generation whose lives were made comfortable through the moral heroism and self-sacrifice of those who went before them, and who were content to enjoy what they inherited without adding anything to it. With a great sum was our freedom obtained; but freedom is only opportunity. Our freedom is the measure of our obligation. And now we are called to use our dearly purchased liberty as the vantage-ground of higher achievements, to build up a Church truly and simply Christian—wide enough and hospitable enough to welcome and to hold all disciples of Jesus Christ.

¶ It is told of St Thomas Aquinas that when gazing upon a crucifix—the symbol of the suffering and death without which there would have been no Christian religion and no Christian Church—he cried out: 'Thou hast done all this for me! What have I done for Thee?' In that moment of self-forgetfulness, we can believe that the blessing of blessings came down upon his heart richer than ever—for the unselfish spirit helps the ascent of prayer and opens heaven to the soul. When we too meditate on the things which the fidelities and sacrifices of men and generations of men have secured for us; above all, when we think of the Passion and Cross of Jesus Christ, and all that they meant and mean—faithfulness unto death, a God not demanding but giving life—surely we shall ask ourselves, What am I doing to take away the evil of the world and to bring in the life and light, the liberty and joy of the kingdom of God? [1]

The Conscience

Acts xxiii. 1.—'And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.'

When one desires to speak about conscience, and to have the advantage of a personal illustration, then he can do no better than take St Paul—because the Apostle was from first to last an

[1] John Hunter, *God and Life*, 305.

absolutely honest man; because he belonged to an intensely ethical race; because he had a strong and courageous intellect; and because he had been in the course of his life on two opposite sides, and had judged that to be the greatest wrong which afterward he came to regard as the greatest right.

1. Conscience is the little bit of divinity which survives in us. Perhaps the only thing that is sure about conscience is its existence—there is no human being without a certain judgment concerning right and wrong. It is by far the greatest gift of the human spirit. It is greater than the mind: for it is the mind of God speaking to and through the mind of man: the small boy's definition was both beautiful and true, 'Conscience is Jesus whispering in the heart.' It is greater than memory, that marvellous power of the mind without which life would lack all continuity. Memory recalls great experiences, hears voices long and silent, sees again familiar faces; but conscience gives quality and character to memory, sorts out the things memory recalls, brings to one rebuke, remorse, to another approval and the joy of achievement. Conscience is greater than the imagination. Imagination, said Napoleon, rules the world; but not imagination divorced from conscience; Conscience sits in judgment upon the children of the imagination, brings to each an unerring and inflexible standard, says of this one Right, of another Wrong. Conscience is greater than the will. The will says, 'I will,' 'I will not.' But conscience dares to set up a higher authority. To my firm 'I will' it rings out 'You ought not'; to my 'I will not,' 'You ought.' Conscience—it is the supreme court of the universe set up in the human spirit.

¶ R. M. Wanamaker in his Life of President Lincoln tells us that 'the first court of justice was established by God Almighty. Wherever he established a man He established a court, because He put the court in the man. The most instantaneous, automatic, infallible, human function known is that of conscience. From the primitive man to the most civilized, conscience has so corrected and chastised our conduct that if the promptings of the still small voice are followed, human nature does not go far wrong. . . . Every controversy of Lincoln, as layman, lawyer, or leader, had first to receive the sanction of this court. If it failed to secure the judgment of the court of conscience, no matter what financial sacrifices were involved, no matter what friendships were at stake, no matter what political issues might be affected, Lincoln refused to have anything further to do with such controversy. Conscience having rejected it, Lincoln rejected it, and so far as he was concerned it was at an end.' [1]

2. Conscience may sometimes be wrong, which sounds at first rather startling. When it is engaged with elemental questions of right and wrong, such as truth and falsehood, its voice is clear and commands unanimous assent; but when it is dealing with courses of action, say, in religion, you may have the puzzling spectacle of two good men, one holding a thing to be right, and the other holding it to be wrong. The mistakes and crimes and disasters of conscience are very instructive and lamentable chapters. What an anomaly conscience has often been. A nation will do, as a nation, what its individual members would refuse with horror to do; a man in public life will pursue a course of action he would never dream of doing in a private capacity. Priests who had been plotting against Christ, and had hired men to swear away His life, refused to enter the palace of Pilate, lest they should make themselves unclean for the Passover; they had no conscience about a judicial murder, they had a conscience about ceremonial uncleanness. Paul considered it his duty to persecute Christians and to oppose Christ, just as, later, he considered it his duty to suffer for Christ; and his conscience was equally honest, both when he was a Pharisee and when he was a Christian. When one, therefore, says, 'My conscience says this or that,' he must be listened to, because he is really appealing to the supreme part; but it does not follow that his conscience is right.

¶ Of all liars and false accusers, a sick conscience is the most inventive and indefatigable. The devoted daughter, wife, mother, whose life has been given to unselfish labours, who has filled a place which it seems to others only an angel would make good, reproaches herself with incompetence and neglect of duty. The humble Christian, who has been a model to others, calls himself a worm of the dust on one page of his diary, and arraigns himself on the next for coming short of the perfection of an archangel.

[1] R. M. Wanamaker, *The Voice of Lincoln*, 41.

Conscience itself requires a conscience, or nothing can be more unscrupulous. It told Saul that he did well in persecuting the Christians. It has goaded countless multitudes of various creeds to endless forms of self-torture. The cities of India are full of cripples it has made. The hillsides of Syria are riddled with holes, where miserable hermits, whose lives it has palsied, lived and died like the vermin they harboured.[1]

3. So it is our duty to see that our conscience is enlightened. When a man's conscience points out to him a line of action, he has no alternative except to follow it; and, as regards his fellows, they have no alternative except to allow him to follow it, unless it be contrary to the public weal. At the same time, when any one observes that his conscience about things is different from that of many of his neighbours, and his neighbours happen to be at least as good as himself, he had better consider the situation. Has his conscience been working freely, or has it been warped by traditional prejudice, by professional associations, by personal profit, or by any other influence? The conscience, again, of a savage is a very different thing from the conscience of a Christian; and the conscience of a Christian in the tenth generation of honourable, philanthrophic, public-spirited people is very different from the conscience of a Christian who has come of coarse, unintelligent, and low-living people.

Conscience is like other faculties, something which has to be trained and educated, if it is to be a true monitor within. Through neglect conscience may be 'weak'; through defiance of its restraint, 'defiled.' The moral law abides, and we suffer every time we break it. We penalize ourselves by refusing to hearken to conscience. When we 'bend our conscience' to satisfy our appetite or our desires, we are robbing ourselves. Conscience says, as does wisdom, 'He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul.'

¶ Conscience must be obeyed, but it may have been so abused that it ceases to guide aright. It may be like the great Cunarder which found itself on Nantucket Shoals, when sextant and compass showed that it must be two hundred miles distant. A nail driven by the ship's carpenter too close to the needle had swerved it just a little from the true course until it took the great steamship astray. The needle is conscience; the nail is sin.[1]

[1] Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Elsie Venner*.

Conscience must be kept in contact with Christ in order to keep it untarnished and undefiled. The best thing for every one of us is to be in the moral company of Jesus Christ. It is when we come to the Sermon on the Mount and to the life of the Lord that we realize how imperfect our own standards of righteousness are. Christ gives a new range to the words right and wrong, so that they search our lives at a deeper point, and open before our minds higher ideals. Life for every one of us is a stormy voyage with cross-currents which are apt to sweep us out of our course, and an occasional tempest that might wreck an ill-managed vessel. He is fortunate who has a good compass, but he is also wise who is careful to adjust his compass; and as a vessel goes into a quiet bay to test the compasses before venturing on the ocean voyage, so should a man return frequently to the Gospels, and learn at the feet of Christ the way of life everlasting.

4. To-day, as ever, the hope of the world is with the individual in whom conscience is supreme. It was said of a great preacher that he was a conscience to the city in which he lived. That is the one way out. We must each of us be a conscience to our homes, to our business, to the community in which we live. How can we hope to do it? The New Testament points the way. We need the conscience, cleansed of all its defilements and perversions; 'the blood of Christ,' says the writer to the Hebrews in a great gospel note, 'shall cleanse your conscience from dead works'—that is, from everything tainted by the spirit of self, which is the spirit of death—'to serve the living God.' Then we need to have the conscience educated, and this is done by constant contact with the conscience of Christ. And then it needs to be constantly exercised by sensitive obedience in the way made so clear by St Paul. So will its guidance be ever more clear in time and eternity.

God sets a still small Voice
Deep every soul within;
It guideth to the right,
And warneth us of sin.
If we that Voice obey,

[1] J. I. Vance, *Royal Manhood*, 100.

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Clearer its tones will be,
Till all God's will for us
Clear as noonday we see.
If we that Voice neglect,
Fainter will be its tone;
If still unheeded, it
Will leave us quite alone.
O grief! to be allowed
To go our own wild way;
Lord, hold Thy children back,
Lest we so sadly stray.

Clairvoyance

Acts xxiii. 2, 3.—'And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall.'

THERE was an occasion when Paul committed a serious diplomatic blunder. He was on trial for his life, and the white-robed High Priest, Ananias, occupied a conspicuous seat upon the bench among his judges. At a certain point Ananias, being angry at something Paul said, commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth, and Paul said, 'God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?' 'Hush!' said shocked voices, 'revilest thou God's High Priest?' 'I wist not,' said Paul, 'that he was the high priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.'

A dim-eyed man, one fancies, not given to close physical discernment, with no lynx-like faculty for reading character by the face, much more concerned about abstract principles than about manipulating persons, he sensed rather than saw them. He was much more conscious of Ananias's injustice than of his office. The priest's white robe was more apparent than his face, and made him think of the whited wall of a sepulchre, fair to outward seeming but hiding dead men's bones. 'Thou whited wall!' The eyes deceived him again, as they often did, but his soul's vision was true. Just the kind of dim-seeing man to be led by his very infirmity to disparage judgments based merely upon the outward appearance.

For Paul carried this natural bias into the highest realms of his philosophy. 'We look,' said he, 'not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.' There he laid down a thesis which is not restricted to those of defective vision, but which might well be grasped more readily by one who was reminded every day that the judgment of the eye was not unquestionable.

¶ It was my good fortune once to know very well a man who was totally blind. It was a favourite assertion of his that it is only the blind who see. What is obvious, he would say, is opaque. It was a constant irritation to him that seeing people see so little. Their eyes neutralize their ears, destroy their sense of touch, paralyse their imagination, and disconnect their thoughts. He was a specialist in rose culture and sea-shells. He knew all roses by their touch and perfume. He knew shells by their shape and texture. He had a mental image for every person whom he knew, and he saw them only in correspondence with their characters. It was their souls he recognized rather than their bodies. It was not only that he was more sensitive to what was spiritual, but he made one feel that even the physical had more significance than ordinary people perceived.[1]

1. The eye is the best guide we have, provided that along with it go all the other faculties of our being; but if the eye goes on alone, it is very apt to lead us astray. Man is by no means the creature who sees best. His high distinction is to reason as well as to see. His inner sight sets him alone among created things. It may even be that a merciful Providence has limited his powers of vision lest, seeing too satisfyingly, he should grow blind within.

The truth about man is that he must always be correcting his vision by his powers of reason. As Lord Balfour has said, 'The most ruthless editing is required to force the uncensored messages we receive from the external world into the ideal mould which satisfies our individual convictions.' It is perfectly obvious that the sun rises every morning, but the sun never rises. It is perfectly obvious that the earth remains still; the most volatile liquid remains quiescent in a spirit-level held quite horizontally, but the earth flies through space

[1] F. W. Norwood, *The Gospel of the Larger World*, 172.

faster than a cannon shot. Because man is the corrector of his impressions he is capable of development. Because he preserves his scepticism concerning outward appearance, he enters farther and farther into the truth.

The farther he goes the more he discovers that the mightiest forces are those that are unseen. No man ever yet saw steam or electricity, or scarcely any of the really powerful forces of to-day. Even physics leads us to the invisible. These powers are not unrecognizable, but the eye surrenders her primitive leadership and becomes one in the throng of the faculties acting in unison. One might reasonably claim that the entire advance is toward the spiritual. If we were to declare with Thomas that except we see and touch we would not believe, we should stop the clock; we should be alienated from the throbbing life of the world.

2. How fatuous men are when they say that miracles can never happen. If a miracle be defined, as it ought to be, as a spiritual invasion of the spiritual world, it would appear to be the one thing that is always happening. The real trouble about miracles has been that men wanted to stop at the 'outward appearance.' They were in the grip of a certain scientific ideal. They were persuaded that 'if only we had the right kind of knowledge and adequate powers of calculation, we should be able to explain the whole contents of possible experience by applying mathematical methods to certain simple data.' That was an attractive ideal, and we may well be thankful that it has been worthily tried out. But it is surely as dead as Julius Cæsar.

It was in reality a superstition, negative rather than positive; but the excesses of unbelief may be as extravagant as those of belief. Only men who wore blinkers that they might not be distracted from the pursuit of a theory could have tolerated, even for so long, a philosophy which not only could not account for themselves, but was contradicted every moment by what was most real to themselves. Nature is not uniform. Sequences are never exactly repeated. Causes can never be completely isolated. Even in a laboratory, under the most careful precautions, no two experiments will ever be performed under precisely the same conditions. There is always room for an invasion of the unknown. We ourselves are constantly varying the 'natural' order of things. To quote again Lord Balfour: 'We can certainly act on our environment, and as certainly our action can never be adequately explained in terms of entities which neither think, nor feel, nor purpose, nor know. It constitutes a spiritual invasion of the physical world—it is a miracle.' If man can thus act, why not God? If the Bible means anything at all, it means that when God can find the right kind of man or woman, it is His will to invade their lives with His spiritual power.

Consider how wide a range has St Paul's homely advice not to 'look on things after the outward appearance.' When we are asked not to judge our neighbour John Smith by merely superficial impressions we are launched upon a principle which operates through the whole universe. If we stay by the obvious, we consent to the opaque. The meaning of life is clairvoyance, not opacity. A religious mind is expressed in the habit of looking through the temporal to the eternal. The only way to see things is to see through them. If we merely look 'at' them, we are carnal; if we look 'through' them, we are spiritual. To look through things to God is to be religious.

¶ 'All visible things,' said Carlyle, 'are emblems. What thou seest is not there on its own account; strictly speaking, is not there at all. Matter exists only spiritually, and to represent some idea and body it forth.' Incessantly Christ held up *things* before our eyes—things which in a few days or years would moulder into dust—and told us to look there at the eternal. He held up bread. 'I am bread,' He said. And if you think over that for a lifetime, you will never get nearer to the truth than through that thing, bread. That temporal is so perfect an image of the eternal that no reading, or thinking, or arguing, or sermonizing can get us closer to Christ.

Hence the triumphant way in which He ransacked the temporal world, and—what we, with our false views of spirituality, had never dared—marked off for us all its common and familiar things as mirrors of the eternal. So light, life, vine, wine, bread, water, physician, shepherd, and a hundred others, have all become transformed with a light from the other world. Observe, Christ does not say He is *like* these things, He *is* these things. Look through these things, right through, and you will see Him.[1]

[1] Henry Drummond, *The Ideal Life*, 131.

A Great Reward

Acts xxiii. 11.—'The night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.'

1. 'THE night following.' What night was it? It was the sequel to a very stormy day of St Paul's life, and it was succeeded by a day of more silent but still more deadly peril. The day before, his frail body had been nearly 'pulled in pieces' by the angry Pharisees and Sadducees in the council; only the prompt action of the Roman commandant had saved him. And 'more than forty' fanatics had bound themselves by oath to assassinate him—with excellent prospects of success. Could any moment have been much more helpless and hopeless, in a life already wearing out with toils and sufferings? Look at this man. He is imprisoned deep in the recesses of the huge Antonia, the great Roman keep which dominated the temple-courts. He has just escaped, with difficulty, from a wild personal outrage. His life is about to be attempted by a large gang of the most dangerous people in the world, religious fanatics, thinking they serve God by murder. Outside the castle walls there was clearly no safety for him. Paul, however, had long ago counted the cost of openly declaring Christ, and he knew by the intimations of the Holy Spirit within him that bonds and afflictions awaited him wherever he went. 'But,' he says, 'none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God.' Now, that which he had long anticipated was come upon him; and doubtless he needed encouragement and support. It may be that he was meditating over what had happened the day before, and wondered whether he had spoken wisely and well in the great speech he had delivered on the castle stairs. Just then 'the Lord stood by him.' Massive walls, iron bolts, disciplined sentinels—what were they to bar out the King who 'stood by' the desolate, exhausted man who had confessed Him, and said, 'Be of good cheer'? 'Thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem'—then Jesus was listening while Paul was speaking on the stairs. Every word he said about his old life, and about his conversion, and all his Master's mercies to him was overheard by the Master who loved His faithful servant, and came the next night to tell him so, and to cheer him on his way. The approbation of his Lord was a sufficient reward. So it is still, in the deep spiritual reality of it. Our imperfect aim and labour to live to Him, to 'witness' to Him in a life transformed by His Holy Spirit, is recognized by Him. He loves it with His most generous love. It is not now His wont to pay us visits which are also visions. Yet is there not something Divine in the strength which an approving conscience gives: 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of the living God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.'

2. 'As thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also in Rome.' The faithful service of the past is a qualification for the difficult duties of the future.

What is the reward which God in His ordinary government of the world bestows on those who have done good work? None higher than the power to do other work of the same kind more easily, and to do it better. What reward that he would have valued more highly could you have bestowed on St Paul? Would you think of offering such a poor thing as money to him who could say that he had suffered the loss of all things, and did count them but dung, that he might win Christ? Or honour? Or praise of men? In truth, if Paul's work had been prompted by desire to gain glory, or any other advantage for himself, it was impossible that he could have accomplished it. His work was to inspire in others love for Christ, and he succeeded in doing it, because love for Christ was the chief animating principle of his whole life. What earthly reward would not have seemed to him wretchedly poor in comparison with the knowledge that his work was approved by Him for whom it was done? Even in things of this life, that is the only kind of honour that is valued by one who does his work well. What good workman cares much for the praise of people who don't know good work from bad? If in the course of a campaign an officer had successfully performed some service entrusted to him, he might, perhaps, be pleased if a newspaper correspondent gave a flattering account of his performance, but what would that honour be in comparison with this, that, the next time the commander-in-chief wanted some service of

unusual danger and difficulty done, he picked him out as the man above all others likely to do it successfully? Danger or difficulty there might be, but what would these be in comparison with the honour?

¶ Sometimes an employer of labour says to me, 'The young fellow you sent me is no use. He has proved a slacker in his task, and I never can offer him a bigger one.' But sometimes he says to me, 'I've been watching that lad; he's doing splendidly; the first bigger thing that offers he will get.' The real reward is not the bigger task. It is the capacity to do the bigger task. Real rewards are never arbitrary; they are vitally related to the toil. The reward of service is greater power to serve.[1]

¶ Just as they were leaving Shoshong the post reached them. Of course their correspondents did not know in what sorrowful circumstances their letters would arrive; and these were the last drop in their cup. All the letters, whether from Paris or Basutoland, committees or private friends, expressed strong disapproval of the journey to the Zambesi, and displeasure at its having been undertaken. As for a mission there, it was out of the question. Only one letter brought the least encouragement to Coillard—it was one addressed by the Rev. W. G. Lawes, of the L.M.S., New Guinea, to Mme. Coillard, who had gone out with him and his wife in the *John Williams* (1860). This was the letter: 'I remember you perfectly as you were then, and have sometimes been helped and strengthened by the remembrance of your strong faith. . . . Our work on Savage Island was very delightful. "All work for Christ is that," you will say, and so indeed it is, but it had in it that which human nature rejoices in—a large measure of success and prosperity. It was my happiness to baptize upwards of one thousand converts, to train a band of young men who are now at work as pastors on their own island, and as pioneers on this and other heathen [islands], and, above all, to translate into their language the whole of the New Testament and part of the Old. . . . *I felt sorry to leave the work on Savage Island, but the call to harder work, more self-denying work, is an honour from the Master's hands. Does He not in this way deal with His servants? Is not the reward of service in His Kingdom more service, harder service, and (measured by human standards) less successful service?* We deal just so with our children, and we ought not to repine when our Father calls us from some loved, congenial work to something more arduous and difficult.'[1]

3. Since the Ascension of our Lord there has been no such important epoch in the history of our religion as that which was indicated in the words: 'So shalt thou bear witness also in Rome.' It was the change of the centre of operations from Jerusalem, the capital of the Jewish nation, to Rome, which was then the capital of the world. The move decided that Christianity was not to be a mere sect of Judaism, but a world-religion. We can easily appreciate the immense importance of the change, and will readily own that no work done by any other Christian missionary deserves to be mentioned. But if the service was an important one, it was also one of difficulty and danger. The difficulty, indeed, was appalling, and, before the event, might well have seemed insurmountable. How did it seem possible to bring together as brethren at the same table the Jew, who thought it pollution to eat with the uncircumcised, and the Roman, who felt angry contempt for the slave that dared to think himself as good as his master, and who, while tolerant of all other religions, hated the intolerance of these bigoted provincials? As for danger we recall Paul's summary of his experience: 'In perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren.' Yet the success was complete, and Paul lived to see it; and when he looked round on the number of Gentile churches which claimed him as their founder, he could not forbear expressing his thankfulness, mixed with wonder, that God should have chosen him though 'less than the least of all saints, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.'

4. It is very common with those who trace the history of men who have raised themselves to great and unexpected distinction, to imagine them as having in early life planned for themselves the position they were ultimately to reach. Paul was a Roman citizen, and he tells us that he wanted to go to Rome. Professor

[1] G. H. Morrison, *Highways of the Heart*, 261.

[1] C. W. Mackintosh, *Coillard of the Zambesi*, 287.

Ramsay will have it that, as Paul was the biggest brain and the bravest soul of his age, he thought imperially and had already conceived of his despised Christianity as the future religion of the Roman Empire. No wonder, then, that he wanted to go to Rome. His dream was to crown his life-work by the capture of the imperial city for Christ. Paul was an optimist and his dreams came true, though not quite in the manner that he expected. He entered Rome as a prisoner—this ideal preacher, this master of vast audiences—to spend two years in prison and comparative silence.

Whatever his own feelings or wishes might have been, a Providential Hand was guiding him, and the Apostle was not slow to take advantage of every opening that actual circumstances offered. If it were asked how Paul came to divine that, while the Jews, with all the advantage of having the prophetic Scriptures in their hands, refused to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, the Gentiles would be found disposed to acknowledge His Messiahship, we need not imagine that this was the result of profound meditation on his part on all that was implied in the preaching of One who had been crucified; nor need we imagine more than Scripture has told us of special revelations of God to him. How is it that water dammed up will contrive to make its way through a barrier which might seem impenetrable? It is that, by its continuous pressure against the obstacle, it explores it all, until its searching has found some weak part. If such there be, and even a minute stream manages to trickle through, as the tiny flow proceeds the orifice constantly enlarges itself, more and more of the opposing barrier crumbles away, the stream becomes a torrent, and at length, with resistless force, carries all before it. Such a pressure was exercised by that love for Christ of which Paul's heart was full, and which constantly urged him to seek others to whom to impart it. Disappointed he must have been to find that the men of his own race and religion, with whom his influence had been the greatest, were too hardened by life-long prejudice to yield any admission to the new teaching. Meanwhile, it would be a surprise to find that an audience could be found among the despised few who fringed the circle of his Jewish hearers — proselytes, curious listeners, who had come to hear what went on in the Jewish Synagogue. Surprising it might seem to him, yet quite natural to us. These men had already lost their faith in the outworn creeds in which they had been brought up, and as they had owned the superiority of Judaism to what their childhood had learned, so they were open to accept something still higher if it were presented to them. In their ranks, then, the gospel message found the weak spot in the opposing barrier. First one, then another, would consent to acknowledge Jesus as his Lord. Every new convert would be a centre of influence on his friends and countrymen; the little trickle became a stream. At length, and mainly by Paul's exertions, the wall of partition which divided Jew from Gentile was completely swept away, and it became acknowledged by all that in Christ Jesus there was neither Jew nor Gentile, circumcision nor uncircumcision, but Christ was all and in all.

So the Apostle was led by God, and educated for his marvellous work. And for us the practical lesson is the same as was exemplified in the words to him: 'As thou hast borne witness in Jerusalem, so shalt thou bear witness also in Rome.' Still the rule is: 'To him that hath shall more be given.' We need not expect a special revelation making known to us the work God has for us to do. The duty that lies in our way, if faithfully discharged, trains ourselves in the power to do something more difficult, leads others to trust us with something more difficult, and educates our own eye to take notice of neglected opportunities, and see what ought to be done.

¶ The biographer of James Fraser, Bishop of Manchester, tells us how the Bishop's work in his little parish of two or three hundred people gradually trained him for the great work of one of the most important dioceses in England. He had shown himself faithful in the least things of his little parish; he was found faithful in the great things of his great diocese.[1]

Of those who enter on a new sphere of duty there are some, no doubt, who have observed beforehand unnoticed capabilities in it, and have begun with the expectation of doing more in it than any one before them had done. But there are many more who are led on by little and little, and would have been frightened, as well as surprised, if it could have been told them beforehand that it was expected that they

[1] H. G. Youard.

should do all that in the event came naturally to them. Let us put our best into all the work that God gives us, and we shall find ourselves led on to more and higher work, and will one day hear His words: 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'

A Pure Conscience

Acts xxiv. 16.—'Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.'

1. THERE is no greater need in the Christian life than that of recognizing the place of conscience, and of cultivating a consideration of its demands at any cost. For conscience is not a mere intuition by which we determine right from wrong, a faculty more fully developed in some than in others. Still less is it an independent and unregulated source of law. Were the latter so, a plea of obedience to conscience would be sufficient justification for violation of the ethical standards of the gospel, or of the laws which govern the existing social order. Conscience independent and unregulated is unreliable as a guide. It must be regulated by the Word of God, that its voice may always be the echo of the Divine voice.

¶ The weights and measures of Great Britain and her dependencies are regulated by certain lengths of bronze and masses of platinum in charge of the Office of Standards of the Board of Trade. These, of course, might by time or accident become altered. It is therefore desirable to have certain standards which, so far as human ingenuity can insure them, are protected against change. These have been provided by Act of Parliament, and are preserved and immured in the wall of the House. Every twenty years the standard yard and weights used by the Board of Trade are brought to Parliament, and carefully compared with the absolute standards therein preserved.[1]

In order to have a right understanding of the place of conscience in the life of the believer, a simple consideration of its functions will be helpful. And such a consideration can, of course, be based only upon experience and observation. That which is called conscience is the faculty of common possession, upon which the Spirit of God projects the will of God. It is the organ of moral apprehension, by which we are enabled to discern betwixt right and wrong, betwixt duty and self-will. It is the organ, too, of moral judgment, mercilessly condemning the unworthy choice, the cowardly attitude, the sinful indulgence. Hence it is that the Apostle speaks elsewhere of the 'commendation of a pure conscience,' and elsewhere again of the 'condemnation of an evil conscience.'

Just as faith sees God as grace, and, apprehending His gift, saves us, so conscience sees God as righteousness, and, apprehending His will, judges us. Thus it is that faith and conscience must work harmoniously if any life is ever to rise to the height of God's original intention and purpose. Some there are who lay all stress on the former, to the almost entire neglect of the latter, with the consequence that unworthy living discredits high profession. On the other hand, there are those who elevate conscience to the extent of excluding faith almost entirely, and are self-deceived in imagining that obedience to an unillumined conscience is the highest possible standard of life. For in reality faith is absolutely necessary to the full office of conscience, which is limited in the sphere of its activities to this present life, while faith lays hold of that which is within the veil. Thus, since life and eternity are but parts of one whole existence, the two cannot be dissevered in actual Christian experience.

2. In his bold profession to Felix, Paul indicates the all-inclusive sphere over which conscience presides. It governs his relationship with the seen and the unseen, with the eternal and the temporal, toward God and man. It embraces both the heart's intention and the life's action, and in nothing is he exempt from the strenuous personal endeavour to live according to its dictates, for he exercises himself in this direction 'always.' The humbler and higher activities of his life alike are thus governed, and indeed only so can holiness, which is the Christian calling, be attained. For any disregard of conscience is unequivocally declared to be sin.

The Bible is as drastic in its pronouncements as in its demands, for upon 'him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not' unqualified condemnation is pronounced. Disobedience to

[1] W. L. Watkinson.

knowledge and light is the antithesis of Paul's endeavour, which should be also our aim. The constant conflict with most of us is between conscience and will. There are moral battle-fields in every life, on which the contest seems to wage unceasingly, and the defeat of conscience by traitorous heart and will is a tragedy indeed. For it is the defeat of the love of God.

> But, above all, the victory is most sure
> For him, who, seeking faith by virtue, strives
> To yield entire submission to the law
> Of conscience — conscience reverenced and obeyed,
> As God's most intimate presence in the soul,
> And His most perfect image in the world.[1]

3. These words bring certain comfort to those who are sadly conscious of deterioration of conscience owing in large part to past disobedience. It has lost its early sensitiveness, and its voice is feebler than of old, as though many ineffectual protests had robbed it of strength. Its place has been usurped by unresisted self-will, and it sometimes seems impossible to recover what has been lost. To such an one it is a stimulus to realize that even Paul must exercise himself in order to maintain a conscience 'void of offence.' With him, just as with us, it is only by the conjunction of earnest aspiration and vigorous exertion that this desired end can be obtained. And we shall learn the secrets of holiness only as we master and practise this exercise.

Of what does this exercise consist, and how may we learn it? In the first place we must unceasingly practise immediate obedience to all new light. We must look upon all the spheres of life, upon all its relationships and duties, in the light of the will of God. We must allow the illumination of the ideal to fall unhindered upon the actual, and in the increasing clearer light we shall always see our own next step. But we must remember always that light received and not obeyed is apt to become darkness; and how great is the darkness of an outraged conscience! Further, there must be the practice of immediate confession with a view to cleansing, wherever failure is revealed from whatever cause. The heart must be 'sprinkled from an evil conscience' continually, for only so can fellowship be maintained with Him who is light and 'in whom is no darkness at all.'

[1] Wordsworth, *The Excursion.*

¶ In one of his books Kipling depicts a fascinating interview between a pair of modern children and St Wilfrid in a country church, whose carved chancel gates remained always open by the action of a spring. 'Old Mr Kidbrooke says altar-gates are just the one pair of gates which no man can shut: he made them so himself.' 'Yes,' echoes the Saint with a reflective smile, 'He made them so *Himself*.' The gates to the throne of grace are the portals no man can shut, for the Lord has set them for ever open.[1]

And joined to these exercises must be the practice of merciless self-judgment. In view of our indebtedness we must continually judge our life toward God, and in view of our influence we must as continually judge it before men. While pitying always the frailties of others we must never excuse or explain away our own shortcomings, if we would have constantly resting upon our life the transfiguring light of a conscience void of offence.

An Ascetic to Conscience

Acts xxiv. 16.—'Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.'

1. THERE is a fine suggestiveness in the Greek word which is translated 'exercise' in the Authorized Version. We derive our word 'ascetic' from it. We all know the significance of that term. It brings up to our minds the men and women in the third century of the Christian era who in their desire for holiness went out of the social world to dwell apart in deserts and caves, allowing themselves no comforts, cutting out of their lives everything but the simplest necessities, repressing every desire for ease or pleasure, and rigorously abstaining from the very appearance of them. Their asceticism was limited to matters which affected the physical life, and they practised it for its own sake. The strength of their claims to saintliness lay in the rigour of their asceticism. Nowadays no men and women live as these did except it be the sunnyasi, the yogis, and fakirs of India. But the idea of the ascetic life remains with us and appeals to many.

[1] H. C. Lees.

Some are ascetics in dress, like the Quakers or the members of the Salvation Army. Some are ascetics in regard to strong drink, like the abstainers. Others again are ascetics in relation to amusements, and shun the dance and the theatre. The idea in the minds of those who practise these restrictions is that there are certain things in life which may be hurtful; and for the sake of safety or example they carefully avoid whatever is injurious or doubtful. Their conscience does not allow them liberty to indulge in any of these things. Each of them might say, 'Herein do I live like an ascetic that I may have a good conscience in regard to all such matters.'

¶ To a railway clerk who had written to him expressing his personal scruples about smoking Dr Illingworth replied as follows: 'I feel quite sure that as a general principle smoking in moderation is not in the least inconsistent with a Christian's profession, and many of the very best men that I know are smokers. In the abstract, therefore, I am sure you need have no scruple about it.

'But so strong a feeling on your part may mean:

'(1) That there are "weaker brethren" among your friends to whom it gives offence.

'(2) That you are called to a personal self-denial, "Friend, go up higher."

'In either of these two cases, I have no doubt you would gain in peace of mind, if you gave it up, and also probably in power for good. But if you should find this too difficult, you might turn the fact to the increase of your inner humility, and so still gain grace from it, for real humility is a great gain to us.

'Briefly, then, I would say: You need have no scruple about its being lawful in Christians. But as a voluntary self-denial it may be good for you to give it up, and all voluntary self-denial is a source of strength. This will only be possible in the power of prayer.' [1]

2. From these illustrations we are able to interpret what Paul meant when he said, 'Herein do I exercise myself.' He lived like an ascetic, disciplined himself, kept careful watch and guard lest he should give offence to his own conscience. It was not only in regard to meat and drink or dress and amusements that he acted thus. He lived the ascetic life in avoiding every offence toward God and man. He sought with the utmost personal rigour to have a conscience that was at peace, and that could not accuse him of any offence towards them.

We must not suppose that the Apostle found it easy to be a Christian any more than we do. He had a battle to fight just as we have. He had pleas for ease to silence, reasons for slackness to overcome, impatience with opposition to weary him, and failures of hope to discourage him. He was human, and the enmity of his foes must have stirred up the resentment that men feel when they are injured. Think of his persecuted, strenuous, and tempestuous life, and see if there was no need for him to keep strict guard over his feelings and thoughts and words and actions. He was passionate, eager, sensitive, intense. Had he yielded to his impulses he would have sinned in word and act every hour of every day. He felt that, and so he chose this rule of life—to act like an ascetic in everything he did or said or felt, so that he might have a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man.

¶ Apart from his distinguished position and his literary ability Robert Leighton was 'a great and good man.' Lord Morley has testified of him as 'one of the few wholly attractive characters of those bitter-flavoured times.' The passions of men about him were so stirred, their antagonism so provoked, their opinions so divided in matters affecting both Church and State, that to men of less piety, strong partisanship would have been a fatal temptation. But this man had so mastered the secret of Jesus that Archbishop Burnet, who preceded him in the See of Glasgow, could speak of him thus: 'He had so subdued the natural heat of his temper, that in a great variety of accidents, and in a course of twenty-two years' intimate conversation with him, I never observed the least sign of passion but upon one single occasion.'

But not in the great things alone, in the trivialities, the vexations of his private life, this same gentle spirit was revealed. For example, when he had a suit of new clothes drenched by the rain, because of the negligence of the man who had omitted to bring his cloak at the hour appointed, he spake not a single angry word; and when one who saw it wondered at so much meekness, the Bishop smiled and

[1] *The Life and Work of John Richardson Illingworth*, 246.

said: 'What! Would you have me lose my coat and my *temper* too?'[1]

3. As we see this great soul ruling itself with such rigour, we realize that his method of life is one that we can take for ourselves. His words are like a breath from the hills, invigorating us with their pure strength. If we are determined, as he was, to live the Christian life to the full, we must live it as he did. We do not believe in asceticism for itself in these days. We believe that the Christian life is to be lived in society, that social relations are an ordinance of God, and that what He has created is for use. We say with Browning

> What imports
> Fasting or feasting? Do thy day's work, dare
> Refuse no help thereto, since help refused
> Is hindrance sought and found.[2]

We think that there is enough real suffering in the world without inventing any more. But we still need the ascetic spirit, a spirit like that of the Apostle Paul; the austere ruling of ourselves by the promptings of conscience. The secret discipline which it ordains, though it may lead us through pain and sacrifice, wins an inward strength and peace which are a foretaste of the bliss of the approval of God.

¶ No worthy achievement or noble character has been attained without this fine austerity of soul. 'I have a friend,' says Dr W. C. Poole, 'who is one of the leading astronomers of the Lick Observatory, which has one of the finest equipments in the world for the study of the heavens. One night he dined with us in California, and I said, "Professor, I want you to have a cup of coffee with us." He said, "I would like to, I understand your wife makes very good coffee. She will not misunderstand me. You know, if I drank one small cup of your delicious coffee, it might mean missing a planet!"'

Cromwell found that the rough soldiers of the Commonwealth could not stand before the gentlemanly soldiers of King Charles till he had put some conscience into them, and then they became the irresistible 'Ironsides' who carried their cause to victory. Noble characters do not come from heredity or environment, or by accident. A price has to be paid for them. Some pay more than others. Their heritage of disposition, their conditions of life, their training, and their own past behaviour are all against them, and require from them an unsleeping vigilance. Others with whom everything appears to be in natural harmony with goodness may find it easier, though here we have to remember that to whom much is given, of him much is required. But wherever men and women are earnestly engaged in the supreme business of life, however widely they may differ in attainment, there has always been the strict ruling of life in the line of the end that is sought.

¶ Robert Macdonald, then of Blairgowrie, afterwards of North Leith, says in his recollections of M'Cheyne: 'I remember, on one of the earliest visits I paid to London, I was going up to Mr Nisbet's shop, as he and another gentleman were coming out. Mr Nisbet said to the other, "This is a friend of Mr M'Cheyne's." The gentleman at once took hold of me, and said, "Did you know that remarkable man?" "Yes," I said, "he was an intimate friend of mine." "What do you think," he went on, "was the secret of that man's holiness?" and, without waiting, he answered his own question: "Don't you think it was *watchfulness*?" I think he was right, the more I consider it. Often he was with me at the manse at Blairgowrie, and he always left a benediction behind him. He was always on his guard.'[1]

4. We must also notice the wide sphere of Paul's rule. It embraced everything. A 'good conscience toward God' includes all the elements of the inner life—thoughts, feelings, desires and aims. A 'good conscience toward man' brings to its control all that relates to the outward life—acts, words, behaviour.

> Behold the life at ease: it drifts,
> The sharpened life commands its course.

It was not a twofold standard that he had, but one standard applied to two spheres or ways of life. It made his life simple and strong, and produced a character that was singularly harmonious. Too often we are strict with ourselves in parts and portions of life. We watch ourselves carefully in regard to our duty to God, and forget that we have a duty to man. Or we think much of duty to man and little

[1] J. Flew, *Saints of Yesterday*, 28.
[2] *Two Camels.*

[1] A. Smellie, *Robert Murray M'Cheyne*, 224.

about our duty to God. We may be rigorous about religious observances, and free in regard to tongue and temper. Our characters are faulty and imperfect, because we do not give to conscience the whole of our life. We become self-righteous because of particular virtues which we possess, and fail to acquire the fundamental Christian grace of humility, and the deepening consciousness of sin that enriches the soul whose conscience passes judgment on the whole of life. It is not without meaning that the man who lived as an ascetic to his conscience felt and acknowledged himself to be 'the chief of sinners.' His strenuous ruling of life never obscured his need of pardon; his victories over temptation never made him proud; his conquest over self never gave him self-confidence. He does not say that he succeeded; he only says that he lived like an ascetic in the endeavour to succeed, and the consciousness of the height to which he had not attained humbled him in his own eyes, and made the gospel of the grace of God to sinners the hope of his heart.

Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment

Acts xxiv. 25.—'And as he reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and the judgement to come, Felix was terrified' (R.V.).

The Church commemorates the conversion of St Paul as an event of great importance. For it has meant much more to the Church than, say, the conversion of the 3000 on the Day of Pentecost. If the angels, as we are told, make merry when one sinner repents, they must indeed have rejoiced with exceeding great joy when they contemplated the surrender of Saul. And this, not only because it meant a temporary cessation of the persecution of the infant Church, but because of all that this man was going to be for the Church at large in all ages. The essential characteristic of Paul's religion was his utter devotion to the Person whom he believed that he had met on his way to Damascus. To me to live is Christ; to depart is to be with Him: the life that I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

1. This is the man who stands before Felix in the palace at Cæsarea. At the end of the hall beside the Governor sits Drusilla, his Jewish wife; in the body of the hall is a guard of soldiers; and in front of them, stands Paul, a solitary figure, unimpressive in appearance, except, perhaps for his eyes, which have a certain power of penetration and seem to compel attention. He is a prisoner on remand, awaiting trial. To-day he is not to be tried; he has been summoned to answer questions about the new religion of which he is a teacher. Though Felix has sent for Paul in order to get further information out of him, it is not in the least because he is in earnest, but because his curiosity is aroused.

A cynical man of the world, one who, according to the Roman historian, 'revelled in cruelty and lust,' what is the Apostle to say to him? It is very interesting to note what he did preach. Three subjects seem to have stood out conspicuously in Paul's address. He does not dwell on the Name of Christ. It will be time enough to introduce that when he has first tested Felix on general moral grounds. Just as at Athens, when he was face to face with the cynical philosophers, he appealed to them on the common ground of a faith in God's fatherhood; so here he prepares the way for the introduction of the Name of Jesus by examining the motives and ideals, if any, which might be lurking in the mind of Felix.

2. 'Self-control,' 'justice,' 'judgment.' How did Felix regard these tremendous things? Could he pass the test of sympathy with such morally exacting principles? If so, then the seed of the Word might haply be sown.

(1) 'Self-control.' Just as John the Baptist had prepared the way for Christ by preaching a change of mind, as much as to say, 'If you do not repent Christ will not enter your worldly heart: the Kingdom may be at hand but if you will not surrender to its demand God cannot rule'; so Paul seems to be saying to Felix: 'Unless you are prepared to believe in these elementary principles, in self-control, in righteousness, in responsibility to God, your heart is not ready for the only gospel which I can preach to you, the gospel of a Divine Lord and Master. Felix trembled. So intense was the throbbing earnestness of the prisoner that the representative of the mighty Roman Empire quailed. Was it possible for a man who was accustomed to do exactly as he liked, and to curb

no lust or temper, to practise such a self-control as Paul preached? He simply could not conceive it. It would require such a moral effort as he has never contemplated. Yet this was what the man was urging: he proved that at least one man had tried it and had succeeded. The moral miracle proposed made him tremble at its very audacity.

(2) 'Righteousness.' That means fairness and justice between man and man, trustworthiness and loyalty. It means that when you have to choose between two courses you ask yourself not, Which will pay me best? but, Which is right? Justice, according to the Roman Law, was indeed a magnificent thing, but what Paul meant was something that was to possess his own inner self as a principle, an attitude of mind towards his fellow-men, to be held inwardly as a spirit, not sparingly and formally dealt out according to the letter of the law.

(3) 'Judgment to come.' Judgment inevitable, certain, perhaps swift. There is a higher law than that of which you are the administrator. There is a Judge who will judge you—who is judging you now. God is real. He sits on a throne more real than Cæsar's. You have a conscience, if you would let it speak. There are goads against which I once kicked. There is an eternal Right and you offend it at your peril. Once more, perhaps, Felix contemplates his own manner of life and its utter irresponsibility. But who is presuming to dictate to Felix what to do and why to do it? That this prisoner should look at him with his searching eyes and should make him feel uncomfortable was intolerable. True, it made him a little unsteady for a moment, but he soon recovered himself and began to calculate on the prospects of negotiating a bribe. Yet did Paul look the sort of man who could be bought? Did not his whole demeanour show him to be a man above such things—so calm and dignified? The Roman felt it and shook.

3. What do *we* make of these three things: self-control, righteousness, judgment?

(1) 'Self-Control.' 'If any man will follow me, let him deny himself,' The Christian life is not an easy life. We cannot, as Carlyle said, slackly wander into the Kingdom of Heaven. We carry about with us a body prone to much that is evil, to pleasure, to spiritual idleness, to lust and envy. If a great Apostle like St Paul felt himself bound to keep his body under, how can we dispense so airily with the common forms of self-control in which Christians have always believed? It is plain that at the present day self-control is out of fashion. Children are brought up to know scarcely anything about it as a virtue. Of the many Christian virtues discounted by popular novelists and playwrights self-control is the one least thought of as even desirable, much less as a necessary foundation of Christianity.

¶ Here is the conclusion of a very brilliant and much-discussed novel: '"And so," I said, "good-bye to London!" We said no more, but watched the south-side streets below—bright gleams of light and movement, and the dark, dim, monstrous shapes of houses and factories. . . . We never said a word. It seemed to me that for a time we had exhausted our emotions. We had escaped, we had cut our knot, we had accepted the penalty. That was all settled. That harvest of feelings we had reaped. I thought now only of London—of London as the symbol of all we were leaving and all we had lost in the world. I felt nothing now but an enormous and overwhelming regret. Then suddenly, stabbing me to the heart, came a vision of Margaret's tears and the sound of her voice. . . . I came out of a cloud of thoughts to discover the narrow compartment with its feeble lamp overhead, and our rugs and hand-baggage swaying on the rack, and Isabel, very still in front of me, gripping some wilting red roses tightly in her bare and ringless hand.

'For a moment I could not understand her attitude, and then I perceived she was sitting bent together with her head averted from the light to hide the tears that were streaming down her face. She had not got her handkerchief out for fear I should see this, but I saw her tears—dark drops of tears upon her sleeve.

'For a time I stared at her and was motionless in a sort of still and weary amazement. Why had we done this injury to one another? Why? Then something stirred within me.

'"Isabel," I whispered.

'She made no sign.

'"Isabel!" I repeated, and then crossed over to her, crept closely to her, put my arm about her, and drew her wet cheek to mine.'

They thought they knew what they wanted,

and they got what they wanted, and the end was tears.[1]

I do not ask for any crown
But that which all may win,
Nor try to conquer any world
Except the one within.
Be Thou my Guide until I find,
Led by a tender hand,
The happy kingdom in myself,
And dare to take command.

(2) And 'Righteousness.' Is that popular? Is not much of our Christianity a form of words or the pursuit of a cult rather than a Way of Life, a hunger for Righteousness? The great difference between Pagan religion and Christianity lies in this, that the former is content with observance, whereas the latter aims at the conduct of a changed life.

As it has been well put, the Church must insist upon the supremacy of the moral law, and convince men of the joy and dignity of a life of service based, not on position, but on character shaped by spiritual ideals and expressed in righteousness and fellowship. There is nothing so easy as for Christians to relapse into a religion of mere observance and to be content with faith without works. Curiously they have justified this by a travesty of St Paul's own teaching. Yet it was he who wrote at the end of his greatest doctrinal epistle, 'that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.'

An unethical Christianity can no more claim the sanction of Paul than it can shelter itself under the authority of One greater than Paul, the Master Himself. St Paul is more than ethical, he is religious. He is first and foremost a believer, and from his faith there springs the essential spirit of all good living, which is Love. Surely when we compare our lives with such an ideal of righteousness as St Paul's we might well tremble.

¶ Froude, in his *Erasmus*, relates a curious incident in the life of Ignatius Loyola. Loyola, one day, met with a copy of the New Testament. He took it up, opened it, and began to read it. But after a short time he threw it down, because, he said, 'it checked his devotional emotions.' Froude thinks it very likely did. He found here a religion taught the supreme expression of which was in absolute righteousness, truth, and charity. 'If any man deemeth himself to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, is not just, fair, honourable, open, merciful, that man's religion is vain.' Loyola said this sort of thing checked his devotional emotions! Well, if so, it was high time they were checked. For they were running to seed, and not growing, under due discipline, to flower and fruit.[1]

(3) And what is our attitude towards the 'Judgment to come'? By relegating the thought of judgment to some great day in the future we have minimised the sense of its immediate importance. It has led to the postponement of seriousness about religion until middle or old age. We have almost killed the sense of responsibility in young people. Yet the Bible is full of the thought of judgment, not in the dim future but now and at once. When the prophet Amos said, 'Prepare to meet thy God,' he was warning his hearers that God was in their midst and that they might come up against Him at any moment. To us Christians who believe in God incarnate, who by His Spirit is still here, the thought of a judging Christ is even more tremendous. The eyes of a starving man, or a suffering child, or a sweated clerk, or a victim of men's lust in the streets are the eyes of Christ judging us with His searching look. It is the man who allows those eyes to penetrate his conscience who really believes in the judgment to come.

¶ 'When I see a poor devil drunk and brutal,' said Morris, 'I always feel a sort of shame as if I myself had some hand in it.'

4. Let us take our place, not this time with Felix but with St Paul. Let us ask ourselves why the Church does not make men tremble. 'What man of the world is there,' said Canon Scott Holland once, 'who is in the least afraid of us?' The Church—the whole body of Christian people—does not impress the world. It is too much mixed up with the world itself and lives its social life too obviously on the same principles as those it is called upon to convert. As it stands before the world as Paul stood before Felix the difference between it and a godless society is not self-evident. What do we lack? Is it earnestness? Our hearers hardly seem to expect that. They look for eloquence and clever arguments. They are sometimes surprised and even a little annoyed

[1] F. A. Atkins, *Who Laughs Last?* 18.

[1] C. S. Horne, *The Model Citizen*, 140.

when a preacher insists that he really means what he says. Nothing but the serious willingness of the whole Christian community to take the risks of applying Christianity to ordinary life will ever make the world tremble or consider repentance. The Church is handicapped by its own members who have no belief in the power of their own religion.

¶ When we speak of the Church we are apt to think first of its limitations; when Paul spoke of the Church its divine resources were uppermost in his mind—'The Church which is His Body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.' Perhaps the Church's greatest weakness is unbelief in its own divine sufficiency. We confront the indifference, the worldliness, the wickedness of men; we face an earth hideous with war and hateful with selfishness, and we hardly anticipate that the Church will hold its own.[1]

Christians who sneer at Foreign Missions and tell us that it is better to leave the heathen with their old religions: politicians who cavil at proposals for international peace or industrial co-operation on the ground that human nature can never be changed: others who openly trounce the ministers for daring to suggest that religion should be applied to politics and business—such Christians are traitors to the religion which Paul believed and preached. For what is it but treachery to Christ, the Redeemer of mankind, to declare that Humanity cannot be redeemed.

Felix

Acts xxiv. 25.—'And as he reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and the judgement to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me' (R.V.).

We must not suppose that Pilate and Felix were types of Roman governors. On the contrary they were strongly condemned by the authorities as soon as their misdeeds came to light, and both were degraded as they deserved. We have a better type in Gallio, and Felix would have done well to have followed the course previously adopted by Gallio in the case of St Paul. No doubt the decision would be known to him, and he had what Gallio did not possess—'a more exact knowledge concerning the way.'

In the Acts Luke gives us a clear picture of Felix—of his disregard for justice, his open contempt for morality, and his frank greed for money—but we find him painted in darker colours by Josephus, Tacitus and Suetonius. As Tacitus puts it, 'he exercised the powers of a king with the spirit of a slave.'

1. Felix and his brother Pallas were originally slaves, and then freedmen, in the house of Antonia, mother of the Emperor Claudius. Pallas became the favourite, and subsequently the minister, of the Emperor. He procured for his brother Felix the important post of procurator of Judæa about A.D. 52, and Felix, trusting to his brother's powerful influence at court, knew he could commit any wrong with impunity. He was one of the most corrupt and oppressive governors ever despatched from Rome to rule over Judæa. Josephus tells of the numerous robber bands that infested Palestine and that gave a vast deal of trouble. Felix slew a great many of them. He came to be regarded as a terror to them though he was not above using them for his own purposes later in order to slay the High Priest Jonathan. As a result the robbers grew bolder than ever, for they felt sure of the connivance of Felix, the Roman Procurator, and the disorders, instead of being suppressed, broke out afresh in a new place.

Felix himself was more hurtful than all the robbers. The state of Palestine grew constantly worse. His cruelty stimulated the zealots to form fighting bands called *Sicarii* (assassins), who helped to bring on the war with Rome. It is small wonder that his cruelties ended in disaster. His final and fatal mis-step was at Cæsarea, where, in a disturbance between the Jews and the Syrians, he was found guilty of complicity in the civil war and recalled as a result.

Felix seems to have had three wives, each one of royal birth. He married a daughter of the King of Mauritania and a granddaughter of Antony and Cleopatra. Suetonius mentions another princess as his wife also. But in the Acts we find him united to Drusilla, the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I.—a beautiful young Jewess of some eighteen years, whom he had enticed to leave her lawful husband Azizus, the King of Emesa.

[1] H. S. Coffin, *Some Christian Convictions*, 203.

2. Claudius Lysias was glad to be rid of the puzzling case of Paul, about whom he could learn nothing from the mob or the Sanhedrin. He sent him on to Felix with a courteously worded letter, which, however, makes the false claim that he had rescued Paul from the mob, 'having learned that he was a Roman,' in order to cover up the fact that he had been about to scourge a Roman citizen. After reading the letter the Governor said: 'I will hear thee fully, when thine accusers also are come.' It took them five days to come down to Cæsarea, and Ananias brought a Roman lawyer, Tertullus, who conducted the case against Paul. The charges were that he was a 'maker of insurrections among the Jews throughout the world,' 'a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes,' and a man 'who moreover essayed to profane the temple.' This bill of particulars seemed specious enough, and Tertullus complimented Felix on his ability to judge the truth about the charges. The members of the Sanhedrin 'joined in the charge, affirming that these things were so.' The case seemed made out by the accusers.

So Felix beckoned to Paul to speak in his own defence. Paul pointedly denies all the charges save one: 'Neither in the temple did they find me disputing with any man or stirring up a crowd, nor in the synagogues nor in a city.' As a matter of fact, when the uproar came, he was engaged in observing the rites of the Temple worship. But Paul had one confession to make. He did belong to the 'sect of the Nazarenes.' If that was a crime, then he was guilty. But Gallio, Proconsul of Achaia, had decided that Christianity was a form of Judaism, and so sanctioned by Rome. 'But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers.' Paul definitely agrees with the opinion of Gallio and affirms to Felix that Christianity is merely his form of Judaism. He believed the law and the prophets and held the hope of the resurrection. He had kept a good conscience in his conduct toward God and men. It was a most skilful defence. If he had stopped at this point, Felix would have had difficulty in holding him a prisoner. But Paul proceeded to tell the purpose of his recent visit to Jerusalem—'to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.' It is pretty clear that this allusion to money aroused the cupidity of Felix, who saw a chance of a large bribe to be offered by Paul or his friends for his freedom. Paul proceeded to give the occasion of his arrest, due to 'certain Jews from Asia, who ought to have been here before thee, and to make accusations, if they had aught against me.' But these Asiatic Jews had roused the mob to fury and then vanished, never to be heard of more. There was no denying that Paul had told the facts as they occurred, including the onset of the Pharisees and the Sadducees on each other because Paul affirmed that he was a Pharisee still on the point of the resurrection.

3. When Felix could not condemn Paul as the Sanhedrin desired, why did he not set him free? He wished to gain time, and to avoid giving a decision. If he did his duty, and released the prisoner, he would become unpopular with his subjects, who had many ways of making themselves disagreeable. If he condemned him illegally he ran the risk of detection and disgrace by the Emperor. And no doubt he waited in the hope of a bribe from Paul for his release.

His plea for delay was conveniently indefinite. Why not wait for the coming of Lysias? His letter said nothing about such an intention, and took for granted that all the materials for a decision would be before Felix. The excuse was transparent, but it served to stave off a decision, and to-morrow would bring some other excuse. Prompt carrying out of all plain duty is the only safety.

¶ Indecision, cowardice ought to be branded legal crimes. When we have done our best to determine, no matter how near to evenness reasons for and against may be balanced, it is an imperative duty to act, and inaction may be a sin worse than the action which follows the lighter scale.[1]

The case against Paul was never reopened by Felix, and during the remainder of his procuratorship he toyed with the Apostle, keeping him under a restraint which could be nothing less than galling. For two years the Church was deprived of Paul's personal leadership. While the common soldiers might rally themselves to greater effort, it is more likely that the fortunes of the battle would fluctuate because of the enforced absence of their acknowledged leader. All this is traceable to the indecision of Felix, and that indecision had its origin in a lust of gold. When greed becomes the con-

[1] Mark Rutherford, *Last Pages from a Journal*, 98.

trolling force of action, man becomes a slave. Felix began life as a slave, and as a slave, though of a different order, he ended it. He was a slave to avarice and a slave to sensuality. His was an entangled life.

Gold! gold! in all ages the curse of mankind,
Thy fetters are forged for the soul and the mind:
The limbs may be free as the wings of a bird,
And the mind be the slave of a look or a word.
To gain thee, men barter eternity's crown,
Yield honour, affection, and lasting renown.[1]

4. It is probable that Drusilla was responsible for the coming of Paul before them again—this time for a sermon, not for trial. She may have had some curiosity to hear him 'concerning the faith in Christ Jesus.' But the effect was wholly unexpected to both Felix and Drusilla. 'And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgement to come, Felix was terrified.' Paul reasoned of righteousness—and Felix was a promise-breaker, and had procured the murder of the High-priest Jonathan; of self-control—and there at his side, eagerly listening, sat beautiful Drusilla; of judgment—that was the very thought that haunted Felix, only it was the judgment of his emperor, not of his God. No wonder Felix trembled. He was now on trial before his conscience. The time had come for Felix to settle his own account with God, but he put it off, this procrastinator, with the polite excuse: 'When I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me.' Felix was deeply moved, but he was afraid of the Jews, and he wanted money.

So far as we know, the impression made upon the mind of Felix passed wholly away. He remained two years in the palace of Cæsarea, and was then deposed. During that time he often sent for Paul, and talked with him. He often communed with Paul, but it was only once that he was alarmed.

¶ If you take a bit of phosphorus and put it upon a slip of wood and ignite the phosphorus, bright as the blaze is there drops from it a white ash that coats the wood and makes it almost incombustible. And so, when the flaming conviction laid upon our heart has burnt itself out, it has coated the heart, and it will be very difficult to kindle the light there again.[2]

[1] P. Benjamin. [2] A. Maclaren.

Indecision of Character

Acts xxiv. 25.—'Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me' (R.V.).

In the complex character of Felix, the Roman Governor, the historian of the Acts has given us a vivid picture of the spirit of compromise and irresolution by which so many ills have fallen upon men, from which few are wholly free. The picture is the more impressive as side by side we have one of the world's most heroic figures—the Apostle whose life was one of whole-hearted committal to a cause.

1. The meeting between Paul and Felix was brought about by certain false charges against the Apostle. In the trial Felix said that there was no case against the accused, but instead of acting as justice demanded he began to temporize and 'deferred them.' That phrase reflects the very soul of Felix, and it is therefore significant. It sometimes happens that in the course of a man's doings one particular act recurs until it attracts attention and distinguishes him. It reveals the mind which lies behind the act and gives it being. It is the soul emerging to the surface; it is the defining mark of individuality. The act hinted at by the simple clause which terminates the trial scene helps us to understand Felix. It prepares the way for the more famous saying which is ever associated with his name. 'Felix . . . deferred them' is of the same nature, though not of the same far-reaching importance, as 'Felix . . . answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me.' What Felix wanted was to avoid decision and please both parties.

A few days after the trial Felix came with Drusilla to hear Paul concerning the new faith, thinking to spend an interesting hour. We now see the parts of judge and prisoner change, as Paul preaches of righteousness, self-control and judgment to come. Felix could not but feel the truth of what Paul said, and he 'was terrified.' At this moment the Kingdom of Heaven had come nearer to him than it ever had come before or than it ever would come again. Fear made a breach and love might have entered in.

But Felix begins again to hedge; he hates deciding. He deferred the verdict in the trial,

he defers the verdict here. Though terrified, he answered, 'Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.' He tampered with conscience, and never realized that in delaying his choice he had really chosen. And he had made the wrong choice by refusing to choose. He looked for a to-morrow only that it might rid him of the responsibility of the present hour.

¶ In *Peer Gynt* Ibsen gives us the story of a man whose main object is to escape difficulty. He is an expert in deferring decisions, always keeping some bridge open in the rear.

> The art of bravery in act
> Is this: To stand with choice-free foot
> Amid the treacherous snares of life,—
> To know for sure that other days
> Remain beyond the day of battle—
> To know that ever in the rear
> A bridge for your retreat stands open—
> This theory has borne me on.[1]

¶ Thomas Fuller tells how he promised amendment on future dates, only to find that it was then just as difficult. 'Now,' says this sturdy soul, 'I am resolved thus to befool myself no longer. I see no day but to-day; the instant time is always the fittest.' There is such a thing as the vengeance of a neglected opportunity. Age tends to conservatism in habit, and to-morrow becomes harder than to-day.

2. As we read our Lord's great appeals and warnings we find that there was no malady of the soul so much dreaded by Him as the weakness born of indecision. Men were not to be afraid because kings and judges stood among their opponents; they were not to be deterred because the way was strewn with serpents or blocked by mountains; their faith should enable them to trample danger under foot and to hurl mountains into the sea. He charged men to take the Kingdom of Heaven by violence, to batter at closed doors until they were opened to their resistless importunity; if their hand offended them they were to cut it off and cast it from them. He had no place in His Kingdom for men who talked but did not perform. He demanded as none other ever did the forceful soul, the decisive will. He warned as none other ever did against the drifting life, the ungirt loin, the unlit lamp.[1]

Felix thought he had not chosen, but, actually, his refusal to choose became a kind of choice having grave consequences of its own. A man might as well close the door in the face of God as linger outside when he is called to enter. What would we think of a man who had plainly heard the voice of God and yet had the awful courage to reply, 'Go away for the present. When I have a convenient season, I will send for thee'?

We do not indeed suppose that we ourselves could ever be so haughtily disobedient to the heavenly voice. If only we could be sure that a voice was God's, we would obey it swiftly and gladly; but the pain of life is that its silences are so long, and so seldom broken by a voice which we can with confidence welcome as Divine. But is that voice so very rare? or is it not rather that we have not schooled ourselves to understand the language in which it speaks? For it sometimes speaks as a rising terror in the heart. So it was with Felix. But His voice is not always terrible; it can be gentle too. Sometimes it is borne to us upon the breath of holy impulses or simple affections. But whether that voice thrills us with terror or with sacred resolve, it is for us unhesitatingly to obey its promptings. God is with us in such a moment, laying His kindly hand upon our stubborn life. How do we know that He will ever be with us again?

Procrastination is the secret of failure. A noble thought, a holy resolution, visits us. It stands knocking at the door. But it will disturb our comfort if we suffer it to enter and possess our life, and that will not do. So we give it a courteous dismissal. 'When I have a convenient season,' we say. But before that season comes, we may have reached some place where there is no repentance, though we seek it carefully with tears.

> Lord, what am I, that, with unceasing care,
> Thou didst seek after me,—that thou didst wait,
> Wet with unhealthy dews, before my gate,
> And pass the gloomy nights of winter there?
> O strange delusion!—that I did not greet
> Thy blest approach, and O, to Heaven how lost,

[1] T. H. Davies, *Spiritual Voices in Modern Literature*, 57.

[1] T. H. Davies.

If my ingratitude's unkindly frost
Has chilled the bleeding wounds upon thy feet.
How oft my guardian angel gently cried,
'Soul, from thy casement look, and thou shalt see
How he persists to knock and wait for thee!'
And, O! how often to that voice of sorrow,
'To-morrow we will open,' I replied,
And when the morrow came I answered still,
'To-morrow.' [1]

3. Let us think what reasons influence us to say, 'Go thy way.'

(1) There is the instinctive, natural wish to get rid of a disagreeable subject. So many of us do not like these thoughts of the old Book about 'righteousness and temperance and the judgement to come,' and make a natural effort to get our minds away from the contemplation of the subject because it is painful. But would it be a wise thing for a man, if he began to suspect that he was insolvent, to refuse to look into his books or to take stock, and to let things drift till there was not a halfpenny in the pound for anybody? What would his creditors call him? And is it not the part of a wise man, if he begins to see that something is wrong, to get to the bottom of it, and as quickly as possible to set it right?

¶ At one time Creighton had a Shakespeare reading-class for some of the young people; and he gave lectures sometimes in the evenings in the schoolroom. On these occasions he often took a play of Shakespeare and explained it, reading the most striking scenes. At one of these lectures on *Macbeth*, the school was filled with an audience so attentive that they even forgot to cough; but it was almost too much for an old woman who was one of his most devout admirers. 'Oh, it was too terrible,' she said sadly the next day; 'generally when I go home I try to remember the vicar's sermons, but this time I tried to forget as quick as possible.' [2]

(2) Some of us say to the messenger of God's love, 'Go thy way,' because we do not like to give up something that we know is inconsistent with His love and service. Felix would not part with Drusilla, or disgorge the ill-gotten gain of his province. Therefore he was obliged to put away from him the thoughts that looked in that direction. Felix was ambitious. He was unpopular with the Jews, but this was in his favour at Rome. Who could tell what he might become? To turn Christian would ruin his prospects. His duty was clear enough, but just now it stood in his way of promotion.

(3) Some of us fall into this habit of putting off the decision simply by letting the impressions made on our hearts and consciences be crowded out of them by cares and enjoyments and pleasures. And if some stray seed here and there remains and begins to sprout, the weeds which grow apace spring up and choke it.

¶ 'But how do you know that there is any Christ? You never saw Him?' said St Clair to Uncle Tom.

'I feel it in my soul, mas'r—feel Him now! Oh, mas'r, the blessed Lord Jesus loves you!'

'But how do you know that, Tom?' said St Clair.

'I feels it in my soul, mas'r; oh, mas'r, the love of Christ that passeth knowledge.'

'But, Tom, you know that I have a great deal more knowledge than you; what if I should tell you that I don't believe your Bible? Wouldn't that shake your faith some, Tom?'

'Not a grain, mas'r!' And St Clair felt himself borne, on the tide of Tom's faith and feeling, almost to the gate of heaven.

'I like to hear you, Tom; and some time I'll talk more.'

(4) But the chief reason is just the inherent tendency in man to procrastinate and to compromise. Remember the foolish virgins who found it too late to enter in; the guests called to the feast, who chose rather to look after their worldly interest, and thus were shut out from the Kingdom of God; the people whom Christ called, but who wanted first to attend to their friends and business, and with whom Christ would allow no delay. Can we help seeing that what makes people put off in worldly business and put off in religion is exactly the same thing, a dislike to what has to be done, and that the dislike is not likely to become less by this waiting for a more convenient season?

¶ So was I assured that much better were it for me to give myself up to Thy charity than to give myself over to my own cupidity; but though the former course satisfied me and gained the mastery, the latter pleased me and held me mastered. Nor had I anything to answer Thee calling to me, Awake, thou that

[1] Longfellow.
[2] *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, i. 168.

sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. And when Thou didst on all sides show me that what Thou saidst was true, I, convicted by the truth, had nothing at all to answer, but only those dull and drowsy words, 'Anon, anon,' 'presently,' 'leave me but a little.' But 'presently, presently' had no present, and my 'little while' went on for a long while.[1]

[1] St Augustine.

THE CHRISTIAN THESIS

Acts xxv. 19.—'One Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.'

The 31st of October 1517 is a memorable date in Christian history. The streets of Wittenberg were thronged, for it was the day of a religious festival, when a resolute figure pressed through the crowd and, advancing to the church door, nailed on it a paper on which were written certain great Christian affirmations which the writer declared himself ready to defend against all who should impugn them. Martin Luther's Thesis shook to its foundations the fabric of mediæval superstition and sounded throughout Europe the watchword of Christian liberty.

Here in our text we have St Paul's Thesis, the great Christian affirmation which the Apostle was ready everywhere to proclaim and defend: that Jesus, who was crucified, is not dead but is alive. By that he did not mean simply that Jesus was living as an imperishable memory in the hearts of His friends, that He had made an impression upon men's minds which would never fade. Nor did he mean that Jesus had won an undying name as the founder of a religion. Nor yet did he mean that the soul of Jesus had survived the event of death and gone to its rest in God. He meant that Jesus is a living person, with whom men have to do, an ever-present Friend and Saviour, One whom he, Paul, had seen with his own eyes and whose companionship and help he continually enjoyed, a Person so real and near that men could come to Him, converse with Him, and receive from Him moral strength and everlasting life.

I

The Point at Issue

This was the point at issue between St Paul and his accusers as it emerged in the course of his trial before Festus. The Roman governor had come to his province without ever having heard of Jesus. But he had the Roman's strong instinct for justice and he had been trained to sift the evidence as he sat in the judgment seat. So he applied a fresh keen mind to the case as it came before him. The Jewish accusers had many things to say about their laws and customs, which they held to be in danger. These Festus summarily swept aside as mere superstitions. But through the maze and the clamour he repeatedly caught the name of one Jesus, and very soon he perceived that here was the real storm-centre. The Jews said He had been crucified in Jerusalem as a malefactor. This Paul did not deny. On the evidence of all parties in the case He had been 'crucified, dead and buried.' But in face of that Paul made, as it appeared to Festus, the insane statement that Jesus had risen from the dead and was still alive. Accordingly the Roman governor, when reporting the case briefly to King Agrippa, put the matter in a nutshell, saying it was all about 'one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.'

This is still the point at issue. Critics of the Christian religion are apt to raise a great deal of controversy about the Church and the Scriptures, until in fact they often produce a sense of bewilderment and divert attention from the main thing. These questions have, doubtless, an importance in their own place, but it is a secondary place. Jesus Christ alone is central, and attention must first of all be given to Him. How are we to think of Him? Is He dead or alive? Is He merely a figure, however beautiful, belonging to history and to the past, or is He living and working in the world of to-day? Obviously this is the supreme concern, for according as we settle it the one way or the other it will dominate our whole view of the Church and the Scriptures and all the facts of life.

Now the Christian thesis is that Jesus is alive. The Church Universal affirms with St Paul and all the Apostles that He who was 'crucified, dead and buried,' rose again from the dead and is the ever-living Saviour of men. This is why the Church has chosen for her holy day of rest and gladness, not Friday, the day on which He died, but Sunday, the day on which He rose again. And now a long line of nearly a hundred thousand Sundays, stretching in shining array across the centuries, points our eyes back to the Resurrection morning. If this affirmation were to be found false, then our whole faith would fall to the ground. We might close our Church doors, for we should have no gospel to preach. We might shut our Bibles, unless it still amused us to read them as fairy tales. But if it be true, it is a momentous truth. It is more than history, it enters the realm of personal experience. 'If Christ be really alive it is plain that all questions around us are resolvable into their relationship to Him. If He is alive at all He is King, and if He is King anywhere He is King everywhere—all fields of human life and love and labour must belong absolutely to Him. That Kingship must extend to every sphere—personal, industrial, social, political, human. All facts of human relationship and human responsibility must be judged in the light of this supreme and dominating fact. The future lies in His sovereign hands.' [1]

It ought to be clear to every mind, beyond possibility of doubt, that here is the heart of the whole matter. It is the definite and positive work of the Church to affirm that Christ is alive. 'There is nothing else to affirm. The Church stands or falls by this one affirmation. If Christ be not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain—an empty thing, a wind that brings no music.' [2] We cannot, therefore, be content to leave the issue in doubt, as though it were a matter of little moment to us and to the world whether Jesus be living or dead. We must press the point to a decision. We can sympathize with honest doubt, we can have patience with those who find difficulties in the way of faith, but we cannot acquiesce in permanent indecision. We cannot agree to have the matter waived aside as of no consequence. It has been well said by an illustrious foreign writer of our day, 'I can understand how the Gospel should be attacked because it contains this folly of the Resurrection; but that men should pretend to accept the Gospel, while they take away this miracle, which is the keystone of the arch of Christianity—or, which comes to the same thing, that they should treat it as a point of no importance—this passes all comprehension.' [1]

[1] T. A. Gurney, *Alive for Evermore*, p. ix.
[2] Joseph Parker, *Studies in Texts*, i. 97.

II

The Evidence

What, then, is the evidence upon which the Christian thesis rests? What convinced the Apostles, and what impels the Church to the conviction that Jesus is living? It is reasonable to expect that an event so unique in history, a fact having so momentous a bearing upon human life, should be well authenticated, should come to us with the support of an impressive array of witnesses. And even so it is. The various evidences taken together form a strong chain in which historic fact is linked with spiritual experience. For purposes of analysis these two may be treated separately, but in reality they are never separate. We need the evidence both of history and of experience to work conviction and bring us to the fullness of Christian faith.

Take the case of St Paul himself. He gives in the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians a fuller record of the appearances of the risen Christ than is to be found in any of the Gospels, showing the stress he laid on the evidence of eyewitnesses. To him it was a weighty matter that hundreds of living people who had known Jesus during His lifetime were prepared to affirm that they had seen Him after His resurrection. That alone did not suffice to convince him, for at first he counted their testimony a hateful delusion. But the day came when he also had his vision, and henceforth he could write himself down as of the number of those who with their own eyes had seen the risen Christ. It was a decisive event and a great privilege, yet it would not of itself have sufficed to maintain a life of Christian faith if it had not been confirmed by subsequent experience. Had it stood alone St Paul might have come in time to regard it as a delusion, some fantasy

[1] C. J. Vaughan, *University Sermons*, 328.

of the brain, the effect of some fever, perhaps, or of a sunstroke. There are some who so regard it. But, over and above that, St Paul had a continuous witness in himself, the witness of his spiritual experience. From the day of his vision he found in himself a new-born power enlightening, impelling, uplifting him, a power which he could not but recognize as the spirit of the living Christ. So, for him, the matter was put beyond dispute, for he could say, 'Christ liveth in me.'

The experience of all the apostles was similar. As St Peter pointed out on the day of Pentecost, they were eyewitnesses of the Resurrection, their faith was grounded upon the historic fact. But not on that alone. They had further evidence in the gift to them of the Holy Spirit. Manifestly Jesus is risen and glorified seeing 'He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.' It is most noteworthy that even the Apostles found the bare historic evidence insufficient to generate a full and joyous Christian faith until it was supplemented and confirmed in their personal experience by the Pentecostal gift. After that they never had a doubt. How could they? Their faith depended not simply on a historic event, rapidly receding into the dim and uncertain past. It depended also on a present experience, the experience of daily renewed communion with the living Christ. 'It might sound, perhaps, too paradoxical to say that no apostle, no New Testament writer, ever *remembered* Christ; yet it would be true in the sense that they never thought of Him as belonging to the past. The exalted Lord was lifted above the conditions of time and space; when they thought of Him, memory was transmuted into faith; in all the virtue of the life they had known on earth He was Almighty, ever present, the Living King of Grace. On this conception the very being of the Christian religion depends; but for it, that religion could never have been born, and without it, it could not survive for a generation.' [1]

This evidence still stands. Often assailed, it remains unshaken. The apostolic testimony is not easily overthrown. You have only to read the arguments of those who have set out to disprove the resurrection narratives to see how difficult is their task, and how hard put to they are to account for all the facts when the risen Christ is left out. But that is not all. The apostolic testimony which gave birth to the Christian Church is continually reaffirmed in the experience of the Church. Sixty generations of believing people have discovered for themselves that Jesus is living still. He is continually breaking in upon the world's unbelief with fresh manifestations of His power. Take the Wesleyan revival. It was an age of doubt, when learned men thought they had finally discredited the testimony of the four Evangelists. Then suddenly, instead of four, there appeared hundreds of fresh witnesses, and the hundreds grew to thousands, and the thousands to tens of thousands, and the Faith, which seemed dead and buried, rose to life again.

How account for such things? There is but one answer. It is the living Christ at work. 'In Christ—not in the remembrance of Christ—but in the living, personal Christ, a great multitude that no man can number have found God. Those who deny His supernatural power have only begun their task when they have stated the case against the miracles which are recorded in the narratives of His earthly life. They have to descend through the Christian centuries and to destroy the trustworthiness of the long succession of penitents and saints who have testified, on their own knowledge, that He was living still, and that His compassions failed not, and that His power was unspent.' [1]

In all this there is surely evidence in abundance for all who care to seek for it, evidence sufficient to convince every sincere and open mind. '*Si monumentum requiris, circumspice*'—if you would see his monument, look around you, is the inscription on Sir Christopher Wren's tomb in St Paul's. The whole cathedral is the monument of his genius. So, if you would see evidence of the living Christ, look around you. Consider the triumphs of the gospel among the degraded races of the earth, the restoration of the fallen, the Christian forces operating in every department of life. Consider the innumerable testimonies of living men and women who witness that all the good in them is born of the spirit of Christ. Surely there is but one adequate explanation of all this. It is that Jesus Christ still lives and is at work in the world.

[1] J. Denney, *Studies in Theology*, 154.

[1] R. W. Dale, *Fellowship with Christ*, 42.

III

The Significance

It cannot be said that the Church has always shown herself awake to the significance of this tremendous fact. On the contrary she has often thought and spoken of Jesus as if He belonged only to history and to the past. Think of the ardour with which mediæval Europe fought to regain possession of His sepulchre. Was not this to seek the living among the dead? Could men have set such store by the empty tomb in a far off land if they had been conscious of the presence with them of the risen Christ? Or think of the prominence given to the crucifix. 'It was,' says Dr Dale, 'one of the immeasurable evils which the Roman Catholic Church inflicted on Christendom, that it held constantly before the eyes of the Church the exhausted, suffering, agonized form of Christ on the Cross—fastened the thought and imagination of Christian men on the extremity of His mortal weakness—and so deprived them of the animation and the courage inspired by the knowledge that He is now on the throne of the Eternal.'[1] He goes on to say that a similar loss may be inflicted on ourselves if our thoughts are imprisoned within the limits of the earthly life of Christ. Now this is a real peril to many earnest minds to-day. Lives of Christ have been multiplied as never before, attractive studies of the historic Jesus, brilliant reconstructions of His time, till now at length it is our boast that we have a more vivid picture of Jesus of Nazareth than any previous Christian age. So indeed we have; but if it be merely, as St Paul says, a knowledge of Christ after the flesh, it will avail us little. If together with laborious research and historic imagination we have not a joyous faith in a living presence, then we have not yet begun to be Christian in our thought of Him. Hear the passionate utterance of one of the greatest Christian teachers of our time. 'Never preach about the historical Christ; preach about the living, sovereign Christ—nay, rather preach *Him*, present in the grace of His earthly life and death, and in the omnipotence of His power to save. It is not because He lived, but because He lives, that we have life also. It is not because the historical imagination is highly developed, so that we can make the evangelists' pages vivid, and be affected as by a fine scene in a drama—not for this reason, but because we confess with our mouth and believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead, that we are saved. Faith always has its object here and now, and without faith there is no religion.'[1]

If Christ is living it is a fact of universal significance. It means that He is Lord of all, that 'the kingdom (or dominion) of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.' It gives the promise of man's dominion, for though we see not yet all things put under Him, we see Jesus 'crowned with glory and honour.' It means that above this vast world-welter there is a government of love, and, running through it, a purpose of salvation. It means the ultimate triumph of good over evil, for He must reign till He hath put all His enemies under His feet.

If Christ is living it is a fact having personal significance for each of us. It means that He is One with whom we all have to do. It means that in Him we have an all-sufficient Saviour. 'I pray you to mark this truth. A dead Christ can never save us. Even though He be crucified for us, even though our sins be laid upon Him and our curse borne in His body on the tree, even though we behold Him delivered for our offences and slain for our redemption,—a dead Christ upon the cross can never save us. He must be raised again for our justification. There must be the living Christ in our hearts.'[2] We sing,

> Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
> Can never lose its power.

But how do we know? What warrant have we for believing that the blood of Calvary's cross will be effectual to the end of time? This is our warrant—that He who died there rose again. He is able to save unto the uttermost because He ever liveth. He who was dead is alive for evermore, and has the keys of death and of the grave.

[1] *Fellowship with Christ*, 48-49.

[1] J. Denney, *Studies in Theology*, 154.
[2] H. Van Dyke, *The Reality of Religion*, 124.

IV

The Glorious Assurance

No wonder the Apostles, having this assurance, were bold to make their great affirmation, and hastened to proclaim to all the world the gospel of the living Christ. No wonder they were ready to die for it, for in the light of it death itself had shrunk to insignificance, and all things had become new.

Now Christian faith at its richest involves this assurance. And if the question be asked, How can we in our time attain to this assurance? we can only say that it comes by the gift of the Spirit, even as it came on the day of Pentecost, or as it came to Paul on the road to Damascus. Yet not in every case after the same fashion. To some it has come as a sudden leap of conviction, thrilling and vitalizing. 'Once it so came to me,' writes Dr Skrine. 'A saintly bishop was speaking to a group of boys on whom he was to lay his hand. He warned them of the need of perseverance. "Some of your elders, once as earnest as you to-day, let drop after a time their prayers and communions. Why do they so? I think it is just their ignorance: they do not know that Jesus Christ is alive." That brought the thrill to some who heard it. "Jesus Christ is alive." It has thrilled in us ever since.'[1] To others it has come as gently as the stealing in of the dawn. There has quietly grown upon them the consciousness of an unseen Friend, a Divine Helper ever present in time of need.

This assurance will not be withheld from any who truly seek it. There is in every heart some witness of God, some inward conviction of the truth of the gospel when it is presented, for Christ is the light that lighteth every man. Only let that inner light be sincerely and humbly followed and it will lead to the living Christ. Search your heart in all honesty and you will find that your highest ideals come from Him, that your best impulses are in harmony with His mind, that, in a word, all the good in you is ultimately His doing. Yield yourself, then, to those holy influences which your own conscience approves; open your heart wide to the incoming of His good Spirit, and there will be wrought in you the assurance which St Paul had, for you will be able, out of your own experience, to say with him, 'Christ liveth in me.'

J. H. Morrison.

[1] *The Gospel of the Manhood*, 22.

Is it Incredible?

Acts xxvi. 8.—'Why is it judged incredible with you, if God doth raise the dead?' (R.V.).

Though Cæsarea was the seat of Roman government, it was a Greek city built on Jewish soil, so that the ancient world of Israel and Greece and Rome was all represented in the company to whom St Paul threw down this challenge. On the seat of judgment sat Festus, the Roman governor, and on the throne beside him the Jewish king Agrippa. Jewish accusers, Greek magistrates, and Roman soldiers were in attendance, and a mixed crowd of Greeks and Jews filled the body of the court. And what faith did he find in that splendid concourse? Festus was a heathen, Agrippa was a sceptic, and even the pious Jews could hardly get beyond Martha's words: 'I know that he shall only rise again in the last day.' St Paul alone could thunder out with absolute and final certainty the glorious message which has made our modern world: 'Christ is risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' To such a man it is but natural to throw down the searching question, 'Why is it judged incredible with you, if God doth raise the dead?'

1. Let us put Paul's question. Is the story so incredible beforehand that we hardly need to trouble ourselves about the evidence? We cannot say this, unless it be certain that there is no God at all. But if there is a God, it seems rash to say beforehand that He cannot do this, or that He will not do it. It is marvellous; but is it any more marvellous than things we see every day? 'All things end in mystery,' was the old saying. Sometimes the mystery lies quite on the surface, and sometimes science has pushed it back a little, or shown that it is a part of some larger mystery: but mystery there always is.

There is just one thing we can say for certain that God will not do. He will not show a character entirely contradicting that which He shows in the world. Those, then, who say that

miracle is incredible beforehand are bound to show that the character of God it implies entirely contradicts that which we see in the world. This is the only way they can possibly make out their case. Some caution is evidently needed here, if only on the general ground that it is rash to take for granted that God is easier to understand than men. But a miracle is confessedly something different from the ordinary course of things known to us, so that it will show God in a different light. Therefore it cannot be objected to because it gives us a different idea of God, unless that idea is inconsistent with what we learn from the world. Difference is only what we might expect; but is there downright inconsistency?

2. Some answer that the laws of Nature are fixed; but miracles break them. They imply that God is capricious; and this is inconsistent with the regular working of the world. In other words, miracles do not happen now; therefore they never did happen. Well, but what do we mean by saying that the laws of Nature are fixed? If you throw up a stone, you cannot *prove* that it will come down again. Every stone thrown up has come down again, and it is our nature to expect that the next will come down; but we cannot prove that it will. The same causes no doubt will always lead to the same results; but the smallest difference in the causes may lead to entirely different results. We do not expect that any unknown force will come into action; but if it does, perhaps the stone will not fall. And science is neither omniscience nor prophecy, to tell us for certain that no unknown force is acting. Now, suppose we catch the stone: does that break the law? No; it is acting still, as you feel from the weight on your hand; but after all, the stone has not fallen, and the course of the world is different from what it would have been without you. If we can do this, and even a beast can do it, will it be safe to say that only God cannot? But it may be answered that, although He can do miracles, it does not follow that He will. Does the regularity of His working amount to an engagement that He will never use any forces beyond those at present known to science? Nobody will be bold enough to say this. And if He is free to use forces not at present known to science, can we be sure that all of them will some day be discovered? May not some of them remain for ever unknown? And will not these be enough to account for some things different from the course of the world as known to us?

¶ Anybody who looks at the definition of a miracle as a contravention or overriding of the laws of Nature will see that it implies that we are in full possession of the knowledge of Nature's laws; and it is quite evident that we are not. Who are we to say a thing is, or is not, 'supernatural,' when we know so ill the boundaries of the 'natural?' Really 'miracle' and 'supernatural' are question-begging words; they imply knowledge which is not there; they rest solely on presupposition. The really scientific mind never labels a thing till it knows, and in the best museums labels can be removed as knowledge grows.[1]

But is it not caprice after all, if God's action in any way changes the ordinary course of the world? If God laid down the laws of the world as we say He did, they must express His character; so that it is absurd to suppose that He breaks them. This is a sound argument; but two things need to be noticed. The first is that we do not yet know all the laws of the world. The other is that it may be that the laws of the world at present known to us do *not* fully express His character, if we refuse to take into account some facts which we call miraculous. The present limits of science are not necessarily the limits of God's action in the world.

¶ 'What,' says Thomas Carlyle, 'are the laws of Nature? To me, perhaps the Rising of One from the dead were no violation of these laws but a confirmation; were some far deeper law, now first penetrated into and by Spiritual Force (even as the rest have all been), brought to bear on us with its Material Force.'

3. There is a point of some importance which is very commonly overlooked. If we care to know whether the gospel is true, we are bound to take it provisionally on its own showing, and not set up dummies of our own in its place. It is not the teaching of the gospel that God works miracles in all ages. Almost all of those we find in Scripture belong to three short and plainly critical periods. They group round Moses, Elijah, and our Lord. They are not isolated physical marvels, but connected por-

[1] T. R. Glover.

tions of a moral scheme. We throw aside nine-tenths of the case before us if we ignore their moral character and their connection with each other. If, then, it be objected that miracles do not happen now, we answer, Why should they happen? If the gospel tells us truly that Jesus of Nazareth is the final and sufficient revelation of God, we have no right to expect that it will be helped out with a series of miracles in later ages.

I say, that miracle was duly wrought
When, save for it, no faith was possible.
Whether a change were wrought i' the shows o' the world,
Whether the change came from our minds which see
Of shows o' the world so much as and no more
Than God wills for His purpose,—(what do I
See now, suppose you, there where you see rock
Round us?)—I know not; such was the effect,
So faith grew, making void more miracles
Because too much: they would compel, not help.
I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it,
And has so far advanced thee to be wise.[1]

4. There is one other great reason which men give for saying that miracles are incredible beforehand. If they are true, they show that God is merciful and good; and this is inconsistent with the laws of Nature, which are utterly merciless. So they are in the sense that whoever breaks them will certainly be punished sooner or later. But what should we think of a ruler who made laws, and then neglected to punish offenders? But it is urged further that God's laws in Nature are cruel in themselves. The gospel fully recognizes this sterner side. If it is written, 'He delighteth in mercy,' it is also written, 'God is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.' Now, if we could know things beyond the present reach of science, might not possibly this slowness to anger turn out to be based on love and mercy? Nature is good to those who obey her, and if all men did obey her few would have reason for complaint. But is not sternness inconsistent with love and mercy? Not at all. The gospel represents God as our Father; and a father's goodness to his children does not consist in simply giving them everything pleasant. Even for this life's training it is often the most loving course to let men suffer the consequences of their evil deeds. And if suffering be needed to train us for this life, can we be sure that it is not needed to train us for another life? What confuses the matter is our perverse idea of justice, that every man ought to be rewarded in this life according to his works. It would go hard with us, if God took us at our word and gave us in this life what we deserve. But this, the gospel tells us, is not His purpose. For this life, training, with all the suffering that He thinks needed; for the other, judgment: and not till then will He reward every man according to his work.

[1] Browning, *A Death in the Desert.*

There is purpose in pain,
Otherwise it were devilish! I trust in my soul,
That the great Master-Hand which sweeps over the whole
Of the deep harp of Life,—if at moments it stretch
To shrill tension some one wailing nerve,—means to fetch
Its response, the truest, most stringent and smart,
Its pathos the purest, from out the wrung heart,
Whose faculties,—flaccid it may be, if less
Sharply stung, sharply smitten,—had failed to express
Just the one note the great final Harmony needs.
And what best proves there's Life in a heart?—that it bleeds!
Grant a cause to remove, grant an end to attain,
Grant both to be just—and what mercy in pain!
Cease the sin with the sorrow! See morning begin!
Pain must burn itself out if not fuell'd by sin.[1]

There seems to be no reason at all for thinking miracles, and especially our Lord's resurrection, incredible beforehand. Whatever the evidence may be—and for that crowning miracle it is very strong indeed—there is no need to scrutinize it more jealously than the evidence for any common event, if we could imagine any common event of the same im-

[1] Lytton, *Poems.*

portance, for our Lord's resurrection is the kernel of the gospel. A Son of Man who never rose with power from the dead could not be our Saviour and our God. But we know in whom we have trusted. 'Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.'

Believing the Unbelievable

Acts xxvi. 8.—'Why is it judged incredible with you, if God doth raise the dead?' (R.V.).

THERE are those who talk lightly of the 'credulous past,' and of an 'unscientific age.' They speak as if the disciples, and especially the common people of the first century, were simple, credulous folk, who believed that the miraculous was a better proof of God than law and order. Any extraordinary belief might readily be accepted in a credulous age like that, when men had no idea of what scientific proof really meant. But is not the plain implication of St Paul's cry that he was fighting against an atmosphere of smothering unbelief? As he spoke about Christ's resurrection he saw a light of sheer mental disdain in the eyes of his audience. He was forced to implore a fair hearing for his thesis. Resurrection indeed! What an impossible and incredible idea!

1. We ought to glance, first, at this bold man who argues for the resurrection of Jesus, and see whether he is a type of person who might easily be deluded. So much of the value of evidence depends on the emotional and intellectual quality of the man who offers it.

It is the verdict of history that Paul was one of the 'brainiest' men who ever lived. Some people, indeed, dislike him just because of his hard logic and his keen, merciless reasoning—they charge him with sacrificing emotion for mind, the heart for the head. We know that he was fully trained in the schools and the arts of his day. We know, for instance, how proficiently he had used his training and his gifts to uproot Christianity, to 'argue down' its propositions, and actually to subvert this prime belief that Jesus, the foe of his ancient faith, had risen from the dead. If indeed, at the end, he accepted this claim, he accepted it wholly against his own interest and against arguments which he had once used with clear-sighted precision. We can be fully assured that there was no emotional bias and no intellectual interest leading him to 'swallow' this or any other belief. He was not a man to be easily trapped by emotion or to be deluded by sentiment. And, above all, he was the last man who would ever confuse a statement with an argument. Whatever people may like or dislike about Paul, if they are fair-minded they cannot help being amazed at his intellectual depth and sweep. He is as clear as daylight, and always mentally honest.

2. Now the question arises—How did a man of this power and calibre come to accept the resurrection of Jesus as a fact, as indeed *the fact* in his life? We know that he did not accept it easily or credulously. With all his intellectual gifts he accepted this creed against the entire fashionable philosophy of his day. For it can be clearly shown that the thinkers of the first century were as little inclined to accept a belief in resurrection as those of any succeeding age.

Let us glance at some of the common views of resurrection of Paul's day.

(1) *The Sadducees.*—The people of power and place and influence among the Jews were the Sadducees. We know beyond any cavil what their views were regarding the possibility of resurrection. They even sneered at the deeper question of a future life beyond the grave. We remember how they came to Jesus, as if it were a huge joke, with that conundrum about the woman who had married seven brothers. And their query was: 'In the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven?' No wonder that Matthew describes them as 'The Sadducees who say there is no resurrection.' Well, that was the philosophical bias of the Priestly Sadducees—could we call them in any sense 'credulous'?

(2) *The Romans.*—If we pass to the popular thinking of the Romans, whose influence was as wide and compelling as their Empire, we shall find an even greater leaven of cold scepticism. With their discredited gods and the consequent spirit of irreligion, what else could one expect? We get a flashing light on ordinary educated opinion in the incident of

the story of Paul on his trial. When the Apostle, as the climax of his argument, asserted that Jesus 'should be the first that should rise from the dead,' Festus the Roman laughed him down, saying that much learning had made him mad!

(3) *Greek Ideas.*—We reach the climax of the prevalent philosophy of the day when we examine the Greek ideas of this subject. That incident of Paul on Mars' Hill is wonderfully typical. As he addressed the people, passing from point to point, they followed him closely and sympathetically until he came to what was the crux to him, the resurrection. And then we read, 'When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.' No gasping credulity here!

3. What led this clear-minded, trained thinker to accept the resurrection of Jesus, even though the world laughed at him and his beliefs? There are three things we may state with confidence.

(1) *He tested and believed the evidence.*—He found the fact of Christ's victory as well authenticated as any fact in history has ever been. If evidence counts for anything at all, an unbiased man cannot brush the testimony of the disciples aside. And it is worth noting that the records are fair enough to state that there was nothing but intense gloom and despondency at the death of Jesus, which was supposed to be the end of everything. Yet, in spite of this assurance that the end had come, there arose those who proclaimed this unbelievable thing. Paul knew these men and women, and tested their evidence. Jesus was alive for evermore! He accepted the Resurrection because his mind was satisfied with unimpeachable testimony.

¶ The reluctance to recognize as possible so extraordinary a violation of the laws of death was so deeply rooted in the Jewish people that the very disciples of Him who was risen, of Him who had foretold His own resurrection, were not disposed to credit its authenticity without putting it to the severest of tests. Yet they had seen the son of the widow of Nain, Jairus' daughter, and the brother of Mary and Martha raised from the dead by the mighty word of Christ—the three sleepers whom Jesus had awakened out of pity for a mother's grief and the sorrow of a father and of two loving sisters. But it was the habit and the fate of the Twelve to misunderstand and forget. They were still too thoroughly engrossed in matters of the flesh to believe unhesitatingly in so immediate a victory over death. But, once persuaded, their certainty was such that from the seed of those first unwilling witnesses there sprung so rich a harvest of beings resurrected in the faith of Him who is the Resurrection, that it has endured throughout the centuries and has not been garnered even unto our day.[1]

(2) *He knew the quality and utter sincerity of the witnesses.*—These were men who were willing to risk their lives for their evidence. Their character stood solid at the back of their words. He himself saw a young man Stephen die happily for his faith. He saw others sacrifice the most precious things for their message. And right and left, through persecutions and slander and stonings, these people were unshaken in their testimony. They were not deceivers and they were not deceived. He knew that these men were as sincere as they were good.

(3) *He himself*, by an experience which was as real as anything material, *had proof in his own soul that Jesus lived.* That incident on the way to Damascus, explain it as we like, remained the one sure thing in the keen intellectual life of this man, who had not the slightest suggestion of anything neurotic in his temperament. God had spoken to his soul: and so, against the creed of the world, he believed the unbelievable.

4. We have mentioned three things which moved him; but even so we have not touched the centre. That centre for Paul lay in the word—*God.* We shall see what this means if we turn to the question he addressed to Agrippa and Festus, and if we notice what the question *is* and *is not.* It is not—'Why is it judged incredible with you that the dead are raised?'; but it is—'Why is it judged incredible with you if God doth raise the dead?' Everything in Paul's acceptance depended on that little word 'God'! He was not supporting or defending a vague general theorem that the dead are raised; he was deliberately resting everything on the known power and love of God, the Father.

After all, there is no argument for resurrec-

[1] G. Papini, *The Story of Christ*, 417.

tion or for a future life apart from God! Without an active belief in Him and His interest, any belief in resurrection, here or hereafter, is only a pious wish without any basis or value. But to the soul which is sure of God, believing in His power and eternal love as shown in Jesus, resurrection is not only believable but a natural deduction of our faith in His power and interest. If indeed there be a God, such a God of love and care and passion as Christ proclaimed, then it is natural for the believer to be sure that His care for the souls He loves does not end with this short span of life. If the measure of God's love be indeed the Cross of Jesus—if that represents what He cared for the souls of men—then every Christian may be sure with Paul that resurrection lies deep in the very character of God.

¶ There is a remarkable passage in Jean Paul Richter, where this point is made by suggestion. In a dream the narrator sees her mother lying on her deathbed expecting the end of all with something like anguish, not because she is about to face a God she dreads, but because she must soon lose for ever a God she loves. After she has bidden farewell to dearly-loved friends, she adds: 'Now comes that which is the bitterest —I must take farewell of the most beloved of all, of Thee, my God.' In other words, there is one idea the religious mind finds it impossible to entertain, that of parting at last with the Father who has admitted us to an experience of His friendship.[1]

All the materialistic 'proofs' that our weak human nature longs for are tragically worthless compared with the assurance of a full faith in the character and heart of God. If God is, and if He be the kind of God of whom Jesus has spoken, everything rests wholly and beautifully in His character and power. Why should it seem incredible that God should raise the dead? If He be indeed the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, *it would be incredible if He did not*!

The Road to Damascus

Acts xxvi. 12.—'As I went to Damascus.'

THE two most sacred roads upon this earth are the *Via Dolorosa* and the Way to Damascus. These roads are pathways of the spirit. The Way to Damascus is the continuation of the Way to Calvary, and it leads past an empty tomb. It is impossible to exaggerate its significance for the history of the world. That is but another way of saying that the conversion of Saul of Tarsus was fraught with immeasurable consequences to our race. The transforming vision that appeared to him was God's answer to the enemies of the faith. Gamaliel had warned the Sanhedrin that in opposing the gospel they might be fighting against God. And now God lays bare His arm. He brings his servants help from the camp of the persecutors. God's answer to opposition to Christ is conversion.

¶ Richard Cameron, preaching at the Grass-Water, near Cumnock, a few days before his death, said: 'But ye that stand to the testimony in that day, be not discouraged with the fewness of your numbers; for when Christ comes to raise up His work in Scotland, He will not want men enough to work for Him; yes, He may chap upon the greatest man in Scotland, and He may be a great malignant, and say, "Sir, let alone this Babel-building of yours, for I have another piece of work to put in your hand": and He will gar him work for Him, whether he will or not. It may be, He'll convert the man, and give him his soul for a prey.'[1]

A writer in *The Times* said some time ago: 'There is no reason to believe that the last conversion has taken place. The road to Damascus is still there; there is still a light waiting to break through.' And this is the hope of the world to-day. Christian truths and principles are being challenged, and to many they appear to be shaken to their foundations. Christian hopes are being frustrated, and Christian visions are being obscured. We need to remind ourselves that, while we have a strenuous part to play, the final and complete answer to the challenge does not lie in what we may say or do. The answer that puts the enemies of the faith to confusion comes from God, and is given on the Damascus road.

1. *The Church depends on God.*—The Church is confronted by difficult tasks, more difficult than any which have faced her since the early days when she set out to vanquish the Roman Empire. She is called to Christianize civiliza-

[1] J. Waddell.

[1] Patrick Walker, *Six Saints of the Covenant.*

tion, to bring the great discoveries of the intellect under moral restraints, and to baptize all the complex relationships and activities of modern life into Jesus Christ. And there are many who feel that the Church is unequal to this high task. Instead of gaining strength, she seems to be losing power. Is our conception of the calling of the Church too humanistic? Our fathers used to teach that salvation is of the grace of God; they were but the recipients and channels of the Divine grace and power. Salvation is not something that we achieve or win. It is a gift. We must of course co-operate with God, but in the last analysis the City of God is not built by human architects and builders. It comes down out of heaven from God. Of herself the Church is insufficient, but with God all things are possible.

The outstanding watchword of our age has been *Evolution*. It undoubtedly stands for great and unchallengeable truths. But the modern mind has been hypnotized by the word, and has misunderstood and misapplied the truths which it represents. Properly understood, evolution is not a slow and mechanical process of development. It is creative. There is room for surprises and new beginnings and new inrushes of life and energy within the evolutionary process. It is not too much to say that *revolution* is one of the factors of evolution. We often speak as though the only alternatives before us are gradual progress or gradual degeneration. When the nations were at war there were those who made haste to say, 'The handwriting is on the wall. Christian civilization is going the way of all the civilizations of the past.' The Church is passing through difficult days. Her hold on the people is loosened, and there are some who lose heart and who say that the Church is dying. But those who argue thus are looking only at man and man's resources. Human progress is not always slow and gradual; it is sometimes sudden, and surpasses the bounds of all expectation. The darkest hour is often the prelude not of despair but of the dawn. A light shines on the road to Damascus, and a new epoch is born. The most fruitful periods in man's history have been those great crises in which God has moved with overmastering power in the souls of men. God achieves that which man could not achieve, and the current of history is turned. We need a restored faith in God, and in the reality of His presence in the midst of His people and of His working in human history. This is no fanciful interpretation of history but a bare statement of facts. The incalculable factor in the affairs of the world is not man, but God. You can often forecast the actions of man, but not those of God. His strategy is full of the unexpected. He makes the most surprising answers to the opposition of men. Sometimes the cause of His kingdom seems almost lost, then suddenly the light blazes on the road to Damascus, and sighs of discouragement are changed into pæans of victory.

¶ Take the condition of the eighteenth century. Bishop Butler said that the influence of religion was more and more wearing out in the minds of men, and that most educated people regarded Christianity as a subject for mirth and ridicule. A French visitor to our shores recorded the opinion that there was no religion among the people, and that not more than four or five members of the House of Commons were regular attendants at church. The pessimists of to-day, who are writing Ichabod over the door of the Church, would have found the eighteenth century a veritable paradise. But in such dissimilar surroundings as a country rectory and a city inn God was raising up John Wesley and George Whitfield. And in the strength of the vision they went forth to fertilize England and America with spiritual power.

2. *The way of progress is the road to Damascus.*—God breaks down the barriers to Christian progress by conversion. When the Early Church was in danger of destruction by persecution from without and a narrow sectarian spirit from within, He converted the arch-blasphemer into the Apostle of the Gentiles, and through him initiated a great movement of conversion against which the enemies of Christ were powerless. That is always God's method. The one hope of the world is in the converting power of the gospel of Christ. How is the Church going to face the demands which are made upon her? She is not adequate to the situation; but what if she be baptized anew with converting power? What God did in the first century and in the sixteenth and in the eighteenth He can do in the

twentieth. Many are asking, How is Christ to be preached to the modern world? It is a big question and cannot be answered in a sentence, but no reply is adequate that does not say that first and foremost we must preach Christ as the Regenerator of those who tread the Damascus road.

What is going to be the condition of society in the coming years? It is said that one of the main topics of discussion among the men in the army in the days of the war was Socialism. That is all to the good if it means that they were setting their minds and wills to the realization of a nobler and diviner social order. But is that goal to be reached by mutual persuasion and sympathy and goodwill or is it to be sought by strikes and bitter strife? Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity are realized far more surely on the road to Damascus than by violence and strife. What is to be the future of the nations of the earth? Many are hoping that the League of Nations will lay for ever the spectre of war. Is their expectation likely to be fulfilled? Lord Cromer said in an article which he wrote shortly before his death, that, while hoping and believing that it may become possible to make some international arrangement which will greatly lessen the risk of war, he thought the full assertion of international supremacy to be well-nigh impossible. And we might share his misgiving were it not that Jesus Christ can cast the evil spirit out of peoples as out of individuals, and can teach them to love righteousness and hate iniquity.

¶ Leaders in the industrial and economic world, as well as leaders in the world of political and national and international relationships, reiterate the truth that the only hope of the coming of a new and better day, a day of 'reconstruction' and of peace, lies in the 'regeneration' of the individual and social life, in a new heart and a new spirit among men and nations. Men like Roger W. Babson, the expert American statistician, say that the need of business, the need of industry, is a new heart, a new spirit. Asking his fellow business men this question, 'When will peace and prosperity return in the business world?' he answers his own question in this way: 'They will return when wage-worker and employer change their point of view towards life and become born again, through becoming possessed by new and better motives in life, and realizing that we are here to serve rather than to be served.' Men like Sir Auckland Geddes, the late British Ambassador to the United States of America, speaking in Washington in a political reference, say: 'The re-establishment of peace among the nations depends on a revival of the religion on which our Christian civilization is built.' And last of all—to quote but one more testimony in this connection—men like the Premiers of the British Commonwealth of Nations in a New Year joint-message to the Empire, say that 'the hope of the coming of a spirit of peace and goodwill among men and nations rests upon spiritual forces, and primarily on a new recognition of the fundamental spiritual fact of the Fatherhood of God.'[1]

What is it that makes the road to Damascus so wondrous and potent a factor in human history? It is the light that shines, and the Voice that speaks, and the power that works. An English merchant who visited Scotland in the seventeenth century heard three of the great Covenanter preachers. 'I went to St Andrews, where I heard a most majestic-looking man, and he showed me the *majesty of God.* After him, I heard a little fair man, and he showed me the *loveliness of Christ.* I then went to Irvine, where I heard a well-favoured, proper old man, with a long beard, and that man *showed me all my heart.*' Paul saw these three things and much more on the road to Damascus—the majesty of God, the loveliness of Christ, and his own heart. That is what individuals and nations will see if they tread that road to-day. First our own hearts with their sin and selfishness, then the loveliness of Jesus Christ, and then the majesty and righteousness of God.

Human affairs may be in a tangle, but the Gordian knot will be cut in God's good time by a mighty outpouring of His converting and regenerating power. We must pray and prepare for this revival, but do not let us think that we can hasten it by feverish organization or by an impatient crying for signs. As a recent writer has said, 'The Church is responsible for evangelism and not for revival. We are summoned to evangelism, but for revival we are cast upon the sovereign grace of God.'

[1] J. M. Shaw, *The Christian Gospel of the Fatherhood of God*, 181.

In the Hebrew Tongue

Acts xxvi. 14.—'I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?'

THERE is a proverb, 'That which is to last for ever, takes a long time to grow.' The lasting passion of Paul the Apostle for Christ had long preparation, hidden in its processes, even from himself, until his hour of illumination.

Psychology has much to teach us of importance about conversion, and though it prophesies only in part, it has this true thing to convince us of—that God is not a God of disorder, and that in the fact and processes of conversion He remains a God of method, working by the ascertainable processes of the human mind. Behind the crisis lies preparation. The purpose of God moves along a path made ready.

By what path did the living Christ travel to overtake and appropriate this man? By what gate of access did Christ penetrate to the core of his being? In his own account before Agrippa of what befell him there is a revealing remark to which we may give attention. It seems an incidental remark and even trivial. There was a noise which apparently all the company heard, but to one of them it was more than a noise. It was a voice, and it called him by his name. Concerning it he says this singular and significant thing: 'It spoke to me in the Hebrew language.' This one apparently small thing in a convulsed and bewildering experience had clearly made deep impression on his mind. Blinded, dazed, shaken almost into unconsciousness, lying there on the road, among the things memory had clung to was that he had been spoken to in Hebrew. He not only remembered this, but he thought it important enough to be careful to tell. It was, to his mind, not an accidental thing, or a thing merely curious. It had significance, and then and afterwards it seemed to him to belong not to the incidental accompaniments of a revolutionizing experience, but to its essentials as a direct dealing of the living Christ with him. Now what had the fact that he was spoken to in the Hebrew language to do with the way in which, on the road to Damascus, he 'was apprehended of Christ Jesus'?

1. *It was the tongue of his youth and his home.*—Paul was born a Roman citizen, in a city half Greek and half Asiatic, 'the one city,' says Sir William Ramsay, 'which was suited by its equipoise between the Asiatic and Western spirit to mould the character of the great Hellenist Jew.' But first, last, and all the time, he was a Jew. The fundamental factor of his thought and life was his Jewish nature, inheritance, and training. He spoke the tongue of his fathers. Once he stopped and held at bay a turbulent mob who threatened him by suddenly addressing them in that language. The home of Paul's childhood was that of a burgess of a Græco-Roman city, but it was a strictly Jewish home—probably the more strictly Jewish because of the alien surroundings—and while the common tongue was Greek, the home tongue, familiar and intimate, was that of their fathers and their faith.

It is an impressive and moving thing to hear this grown man tell how, when the long-gathering storm which was to lay in ruins his old life at last broke, when the old order of his life was violently reversed, the voice that spoke to his conscience took the speech and accent of his earliest, simplest, and most sacred associations. When the living Christ made for Himself a highway into this man's stubborn soul, it was as if the accumulations and elaborations, the artificialities and non-essential things with which his mind had been cumbered, were cut away. He became again as a little child. The Spirit of Christ took the path of remembrance to reach the citadel of conscience, and all the ringing bells of memory pealed in tumult within him, when, lying on the road, there came the voice speaking to him 'in the Hebrew tongue.'

Modern psychology has been opening for us the significance of this. It has shown us how the whole drama of our maturer years is presented before a background, determined almost entirely by our social inheritance and our early experiences. When Francis Galton began his investigation into what he called 'the anteroom of consciousness,' he found ideas, feelings, promptings, and emotions constantly marching in that theatre, going round by the back, to come on at the other side, and march again across that dim stage. 'A large proportion of them came from the impressible years of early life.' We do not get away from these things. They sink into the hidden places; they hide themselves and we think them lost, but they

are too ingrained for us to lose them, and they influence our reaction upon the world in ways that we know, and in ways that we know not. In this region the Spirit of God finds material made ready and waiting.

(1) There is guidance here for those who have responsibility or concern for children. Before them lie the struggles and perplexities of life. As they are living and growing souls, they will know the entanglements of sophistry and artificiality. For them await the stern conflicts of the spirit. Assuredly the biggest thing we can do for them is to teach them such a speech as Christ may make His own, and which He may use as His own language when He speaks in some hour of crisis to them for their saving. In the tone and spirit of our homes, in the example of our lives, in our habitual speech and temper of mind, we are furnishing a language and lodging it deep in the minds of our children. It may be our own doing that one day fiends of hell find that language ready and apt to their lips to whisper destruction in a day of choice. But we may make it such a language as the voice of the Holiest can shape and use.

¶ Mrs Haldane, the mother of James and Robert Haldane, who did so much for religion in Scotland at the beginning of the nineteenth century, belonged to a family in which there had been much true religion. 'She lived,' said her eldest son, 'very near to God, and much grace was given to her.' When left a widow, it became her chief concern to bring up her children 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' In a memorandum found among his papers, her youngest son, James, says: 'My mother died when I was very young, I believe under six, yet I am convinced that the early impression made on my mind by her care was never entirely effaced; and to this, as an eminent means in the hand of God, I impute any serious thoughts which in the midst of my folly would sometimes intrude upon my mind, as well as that still small voice of conscience which afterwards led me to see that all below was vanity without an interest in that inheritance which can never fade away.' He adds: 'I mention this more particularly because it may lead Christian parents to sow in hope the seed of Divine truth in the minds of their children, and may prevent their considering their efforts unavailing even where the things which they have taught seem to have been uttered in vain.[1]

(2) But, more especially, this is a word for all entangled minds who have lost naturalness and simplicity. There are many who are burdened with perplexities, snared in soul, consciously wrong, and deeply discontent. They are neither careless nor indifferent. They think much, read much, discuss and debate much, and are the more entangled, for they have ceased to be teachable. The Kingdom of God is hard for the subtle. They will take it hardly that one should say to them that their deepest need is to listen to the early tongue, and to let Christ speak to them in the simplest speech they ever knew. It is good to put away childish things; but not childlike things, especially of the thoughts of the heart. To many an entangled soul deliverance will come when the mind is forced back past its accretions upon the elemental pieties, and when, through the wrappings and warpings of the years, the Spirit of God strikes down to the earliest and simplest instincts and possessions, and utters the truth that matters in the speech of childhood's years.

¶ In a grown man the direct and negative simplicity of a child is childishness; yet though he may not and cannot become a child, to become in some measure childlike, to make himself reflexly and positively what he was when Nature first gave him into his own hands, is the scope of all rightly directed moral endeavour. Normally, his first exercise of liberty is to shatter this simplicity to atoms; to go as far as may be from his infancy; to break up and explore the infinite possibilities of his nature. His subsequent task is to return homeward, to reconstruct freely, consciously, appreciatively, what he has shattered; to consent understandingly to God's designs in his regard. This is the law of all moral and spiritual life.[2]

¶ You must accustom yourself to seek Him with the simplicity of a child, with a tender familiarity and a confidence acceptable to so loving a Father.[3]

Lord, forever at Thy side
Let my place and portion be;
Strip me of the robe of pride,
Clothe me with humility.

[1] *The Lives of Robert and James Alexander Haldane*, 11.
[2] Father Tyrrell. [3] Fénelon.

Humble as a little child,
Weaned from the mother's breast.
By no subtleties beguiled,
On Thy faithful word I rest.

2. *It was the tongue of his race and people.*—History has produced no such patriot, so unchanging and heroic, as the Jew, and the Jews have produced no greater lover of their race than Paul. A Hebrew of the Hebrews, he loved his people with a passionate devotion and desire. His vehemence against the Christians, this pilgrimage of the persecutor, was but one expression of his patriotism. In his eyes the new faith was a danger to his people, an impeding and imperiling of the victory of Hebraism. One of the finest things in Saul of Tarsus was his passionate sense of kinship with his own people.

It is written that in the revolutionizing experience of his life he heard the voice of Christ speaking in the language of the people and race with whom he knew himself one to the core of his being. The voice that spoke to Saul spoke in a tongue which carried a nation's history, and enshrined the soul of a people. The Lord rode into his life along the open way of his patriotism.

All the great motives natural to the human heart are capable of leading men to Christ, and there is not one of them out of which Christ may not make a portal for His saving entrance into a human life. Among them is this strong instinct of oneness with a people—the love of kin and country. There are few things that would bless the world to-day more than the Christian sublimation of the patriot conscience. There are patriotisms which make the zealot of his people into the enemy of every other people. There is a Christian transfiguring of patriotism which makes the lover of his own land and race the friend and brother of every true man in every land and race.

¶ The love of one's country is next to the love of one's home, and there is never any harm in true love wherever it makes its habitation. There is nothing but good where this love finds expression in labouring for one's country, in seeking the best things for it, in striving to lift it to its highest, in suffering for it with heroism and quenchless hope when its hour is darkest. But there are forms of patriotism which are survivals, with, happily, nothing but decay before them. That is the patriotism which, of old, taught the Greeks to call all outsiders barbarians, to whom no justice need be observed, no mercy shown. It is the patriotism which to-day exhibits itself in hatred and contempt of the foreigner; which calls for armaments to overawe or crush him; which refuses to acknowledge any excellence, any wisdom which is not insular; which would raise the wall of hostile tariffs as high as the wall of its own prejudice; a patriotism born of hatred rather than of love. But that, we say again, is a survival that will not live. It is contrary to the spiritual consciousness, to the laws of the soul. The patriotism that will survive is the patriotism that, beginning in love, will go on in love; that will raise its own country that thereby it may the better help other countries; that will seek its own best, that it may thereby procure the best for every creature.[1]

¶ Under the church at Nassau, the Inn, the Danube, and the Ilz unite. There is the central point of junction for the three great streams. Such a centre, towards which all points converge, from which the very tiniest streams proceed, we find in Christ. Near Him we learn to give its due proportion to the noble passion for our fatherland, and to modify it by that larger sympathy and love which seeks a universal kinship with mankind.[2]

Christ utters Himself in the patriot speech, giving it mightier range because spoken from the deep heart of humanity. As He appeals to what is holiest in memory, so He appeals to what is highest and cleanest in the mind. The motives which take us out and beyond ourselves, the desire to help and bless our fellows, every pity for oppression, every anger at injustice, every longing and effort for a nobler nation and a cleaner and juster social order He takes up into His speech. If we are for such things we cannot be against Him.

Who hates, hates Thee; who loves becomes
Therein to Thee allied.
All sweet accords of hearts and homes
In Thee are multiplied.

3. *It was the language of his faith and religion.*—What happened on the road was the con-

[1] J. Brierley, *Religion and To-day*, 285.
[2] A. C. Hill, *The Sword of the Lord*, 187.

version not of a wilful prodigal, but of an intensely religious man, burning with zeal for what he took to be the honour of God. To fulfil all righteousness was his goal and ambition. And all that high disciplined religion was inseparably associated in his mind with its great language. When the sovereign Christ made inroad upon him, He took the path of the deepest experiences of his spirit and the best attainments of his character. Paul's religion was a code, and Christ turned the letter into spirit, the precepts into principles, the statutes into songs. Greatly attractive and of promise was such a man of zeal for the Law, in the eyes of Him who once said that whosoever should do and teach these commandments, even the least of them, should be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. He brought with him in his disciplined moral soul the finest instrument for the service of the Kingdom, and a nature well prepared for the powers which Christ releases and sets to action. Christ has need of a converted goodness. There is in us that which we recognize as our best self, and, without the pride of a Pharisee, we may be glad of it. It needs conversion, that, being penetrated with the mind and spirit of Christ, it may strengthen the brethren, rather than dishearten or repel them. It is not the frail, weak, soiled side of us only which needs Christ. The other self, which is the better, must be born again into His Spirit. He is not only the Good Physician for our wounds and weaknesses. He is the soul's strong Captain and Commander, the strong Son of God, and He who shelters our feeblenesses should direct our forces. His appeal is to the best. His way of approach is through the best experiences and the worthiest accomplishments. On the way to Damascus He spoke to Saul in a tongue which expressed his purest ideals, represented his noblest motives, and was associated with his deepest experiences. The lightning flash found three conductors to carry conviction, like a cleansing flame, to the very centre of his being. They were memory, heart, and conscience.

And to memory, heart, and conscience He still makes His appeals. By the holiest associations of our lives, by the most unselfish desires of our minds, by the instinct for God which is in our blood, Christ still comes to His command.

Resisting God

Acts xxvi. 14.—'It is hard for thee to kick against the goad' (R.V.).

1. It is commonly supposed that what took place in the case of the Apostle Paul in the sudden and dramatic conversion he underwent on the road to Damascus is altogether unique, and unlike anything we know to-day. But this is an entire mistake. If it were true that Saul of Tarsus, fully convinced in his own mind that he was doing the right thing, and with not the slightest misgiving about his course of action, was suddenly stricken down by the hand of Christ and changed forthwith into Paul the Apostle, there would not seem to be any room for the exercise of his own will in the matter or the exhibition of anything like repentance and desire for Divine grace. In fact, one can hardly see that he himself had anything to do with it.

But these words—'it is hard for thee to kick against the goad'—throw another light upon the problem. Here was a man who evidently had been resisting a Divine urge, an inner impulsion of the Spirit, in great distress of mind and knowing not clearly what to do, till suddenly the seething ferment within his soul came to a climax in the vision on the road to Damascus. It should be remembered that Saul was a man of intense moral earnestness and sincerity of purpose, and he lived in expectation of a special advent of God in the person of a Messiah who would deliver the Jewish people from all the evils to which they were subjected, and inaugurate a reign of righteousness and peace. The belief that the Messiah had already come and been rejected and crucified by the Jewish nation itself was to him utterly intolerable and to be extirpated at any cost. Probably the first shock he got was at the martyrdom of Stephen. We are told that all in the council, including Saul, looking upon the face of Stephen, saw it as it had been the face of an angel. Saul presided at the execution, but he was not so blinded by fanaticism as not to know that he was in contact with something inexplicable, something exalted and mighty, which would enable a man thus to face death for his testimony, praying with his last breath, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' Saul never forgot that look or that prayer; both haunted him henceforth; he could not get free from the

misgiving that after all he might be fighting against God. And the farther he went in the prosecution of his self-imposed task the more insistent the inner voice became, and the more the outside proofs accumulated that he was on a wrong track. With all his might he resisted the presence of the Divine Spirit within him, and would not let himself admit what it was, obstinately closing his eyes to the facts. He was just, as this verse says, like a headstrong ox trying to take a road of his own and kicking against the goad wherewith the driver sought to turn him into another. There could only be one end to this state of things, and it came, as we know, in the psychological explosion which took place when our Lord Jesus Christ claimed and seized the persecutor's storm-tossed soul and united it for ever to Himself.

2. How often we kick against the goad! The experience we have been analysing is very exceptional, though not unique; there have been many others like it. There is a still larger sense, however, in which it is not exceptional; we all know something of it at first hand. There is no harder lesson to learn in life than that of the submission of our own will to what is manifestly the will of God for us. Not simply resignation to the inevitable but rather the realization that something is required of us which involves the surrender of the very thing we have prided ourselves upon as being most in accordance with right reason. Convinced of our own superiority, and wrapped in our garment of self-righteousness, on we go in the teeth of various secret intimations that perhaps the road we have chosen is not the best road after all, and that those we condemn or despise may be nearer to the great heart of truth than we. It is not one here and there who is guilty of this moral error; we are all guilty of it more or less. We fix our attention upon a certain point, focus our desires there, invest it with a certain authoritative quality derived from our own wishes, and then proceed to look on every side for confirmation of what we thus want to believe. It often needs some tremendous shaking up to make us aware that we are dealing falsely with ourselves in this respect.

¶ In one of Mary Cholmondeley's books, *The Danvers Jewels*, a description is given of the situation created by an unfair prejudice conjoined to a persuasion of unimpeachable moral rectitude on the part of the persons entertaining it. A certain robbery took place in the house of which these good people were inmates, and, of course, their suspicions fell at once upon the object of their aversion. They were so eager to prove him guilty that they altogether overlooked considerations which pointed another way. And Miss Cholmondeley skilfully shows that, when their unjust accusations were disproved, their first feeling was actually one of anger against their innocent victim; they could not forgive him for putting them in the wrong. There must have been twinges of conscience about it, but the only immediate effect of these was to make them more dogged and stubborn than ever in the attitude they had chosen to adopt.

It is a characteristically British vice this of believing in our own integrity and the worthlessness of any individual or institution we disapprove of. But we might take another and more intimate example of the subtle and deceitful workings of the human heart from this point of view. A man gets into a certain way of thinking about the rightness of a line of conduct which is questionable, but which he justifies to himself by all kinds of apparently good reasons. It may be a course involving systematic deceit, which he explains to himself by saying that the world could not properly understand the circumstances if the facts were known, which, of course, is perfectly true. The world is a poor judge of human motive and culpability, but no man is entitled to take advantage of that fact for the sake of indulging himself while throwing dust in its eyes.

¶ A somewhat amazing fact in the strange and contradictory character of Samuel Pepys is the constant element of subtlety which blends with so much frankness. He wants to do wrong in many different ways but he wants still more to do it with propriety, and to have some sort of plausible excuse which will explain it in a respectable light. Nor is it only other people whom he is bent on deceiving. Were that all, we should have a very simple type of hypocritical scoundrel, which would be as different as possible from the extraordinary Pepys. There is a sense of propriety in him, and a conscience of obeying the letter of the law and keeping up appearances even in his own eyes. If he can persuade himself

that he has done that, all things are open to him. He will receive a bribe, but it must be given in such a way that he can satisfy his conscience with ingenious words. The envelope has coins in it, but then he opens it behind his back and the coins fall out upon the floor. He has only picked them up when he found them there, and can defy the world to accuse him of having received any coins in the envelope. Thus, along the whole course of his life, he cheats himself continually. It is a curious question what idea of God can be entertained by a man who plays tricks with himself in this fashion. Of Pepys certainly it cannot be said that God 'is not in all his thoughts,' for the name and the remembrance are constantly recurring. Yet God seems to occupy a quite hermetically sealed compartment of the universe; for His servant in London shamelessly goes on with the game he is playing, and appears to take a pride in the very conscience he systematically hoodwinks.[1]

3. But the behaviour in question may not be deceitful; it may be purely and simply hard and cruel, and the person thus acting may be telling himself all the time that he is a very fine fellow indeed, unwilling to stand any nonsense, of righteous purpose. He is full of pity and admiration for himself, but it never occurs to him that there may be something to pity and admire in those with whom he has most to do, and whose lives he has the power to make miserable. He views the whole situation in a false light. If he were telling anyone else about it he could present the case in such a way that they would feel quite sorry for him, and assure him that they think him very noble, with the result that he is more convinced of it than ever. And yet there will steal into his heart from time to time uneasy misgivings that things are not as he tries to believe. He does his best to silence these voices, but they keep on speaking; he is unhappy, and within the depths of his soul he knows quite well that his unhappiness springs from his own selfish conduct. He may go on kicking against the goad, may refuse to listen to these warnings and remonstrances of the Divine Spirit, but sooner or later the hour comes when he can do so no longer, when the mask is torn away from his self-deception. Is it not strange and awful, that self-revelation that often comes to a man when God finally dispels his illusions and lays bare the selfishness and corruption of the soul?

It is an ill business resisting the Holy Ghost; we cannot keep it up. If we are straining hard to believe that our life is governed by one kind of motive when it is really governed by another, that we are serving goodness and truth when we are really serving ourselves, let us not continue in the lie another moment. Let us throw down our arms and surrender to the Lord; there is no peace in anything else. Again and again a warning comes, and the spirit of truth asks us the uncomfortable question whether the harvest of our sowing will be worth the price we are paying for it or be such as we can endure the thought of. 'I know of no panacea,' said an eminent divine, 'for remorse.' We think we do, but it is not lightly applied. Christ is a great Saviour, but sometimes His salvation comes 'so as by fire.'

[1] J. Kelman, *Among Famous Books*, 187.

Christ a Goad, a Question, and a Vision

Acts xxvi. 14, 15, 19.—'It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. . . . Who art thou? . . . I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.'

St Paul, in these verses, reveals to us his religious experience. He tells us that it has passed through three phases. In the first phase, Christ was to him a goad: 'It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.' In the second phase, a brief phase, Christ was to him a question: 'Who art thou?' And in the third, which was the dominating phase of his life, Christ was a heavenly vision.

A goad, a question, a vision. Do not all our religious experiences have these three elements in them? Christ has been to us a goad. Christ has been to us a question. Has Christ also been to us a vision?

1. *Christ, a Goad.*—It seems odd when you look at it from the human standpoint that Paul, brilliant pupil of Gamaliel in that college at Jerusalem, should have felt any compunctions, anything pricking, from the life of Jesus of Nazareth who had been crucified outside the city walls a few months previous. Certainly a Galilean carpenter would not seem an important figure to be considered by the

student of divinity in the class-room of the distinguished Gamaliel; and yet from the contact that Saul of Tarsus had had with the lives of people who had come under the sway and influence of that dead teacher there was a haunting presence in his life, and he finds himself kicking against the goad.

It is an odd circumstance that that life lived in an obscure corner of the world many centuries ago should still be a haunting presence sufficiently near to bring multitudes all over the world into groups day by day and week by week just to think of what He is and what He means to them. However we explain it, Christ is the supreme goad in the lives of men; even in the lives of those who have no use for Him and who are perfectly frank in saying they want to get rid of Him, He still is a goad.

¶ Samuel Butler, the author of *Erewhon*, who certainly went far from the conventional ideals of his time, living in open immorality through a large part of his career, wrote in his notebook: 'There will be no comfortable and safe development of our social arrangements,—I mean, we shall not get infanticide, and the permission of suicide, nor cheap and easy divorce,—till Jesus Christ's ghost has been laid.' Then he adds with sarcasm: 'And the best way to lay it is to be a moderate churchman.'

Or consider it in the lives of those who are sympathetic with Him! Take a man who was contemporary, during half of his days, of Samuel Butler—George Tyrrell, the modernist Jesuit, who carried on a long battle with the Church of Rome. George Tyrrell writes: 'Again and again I have been tempted to give up the struggle, but always the figure of that strange man hanging on the Cross sends me back to my task again.'

Is this not an experience that we have all had? We know there have been certain difficult things that we have been pushed to do simply by that compelling presence, and there have been a good many things that we have been kept away from just because of the prick that would not allow us to do them. There are a good many to-day, when it is the fashion of the hour to throw off restraints, who complain bitterly of the hold that Christ has upon life. This is how an English poetess, Dorothy L. Sayers, so strikingly puts it:

Go, bitter Christ, grim Christ! haul if Thou wilt
Thy bloody cross to Thine own bleak Calvary!
When did I bid Thee suffer for my guilt
To bind intolerable claims on me?
I loathe Thy sacrifice: I am sick of Thee.

Then she turns to the ideal which Christ offers of life, and here is the protest:

Thou liest, Christ, Thou liest; take it hence,
That mirror of strange glories; I am I;
What wouldst Thou make of me? O cruel pretence,
Drive me not mad so with the mockery
Of that most lovely, unattainable lie!

O King, O Captain, wasted, wan with scourging,
Strong beyond speech and wonderful with woe,
Whither, relentless, wilt Thou still be urging
Thy maimed and halt that have not strength to go? . . .
Peace, peace, I follow. Why must we love Thee so?

Are there not many people who have gone through just that experience? There has come a time in life when the pressure of Christ upon them has been too great. They said, 'I am going to have done with it,' and they have not succeeded: they could not get away from it. It is a hard thing to live a life under occasional compulsions from Christ, and yet that is the life that a good many Christian people live. They do not do certain things because the prick becomes too sharp, and they do other things because the prick forces them to it; and that is about all Christ means to them—an occasional goad. And sometimes as the years go by they become more careless, and the goad does not prick as acutely as it once did.

2. *Christ, a Question.*—The second phase of St Paul's experience is a question, 'Who art thou, Lord?' We ask, Who is He? Why not let Him be just a haunting ideal? He is that. What, in any case, is the value of doctrines? Why should we think out exactly who Christ is? We cannot ever say exactly who Christ is. We cannot compass Him in our thought, and why give time to thinking about Him? What difference does it make?

This is what Mark Twain thought about life—not necessarily his whole explanation of life,

but it was a mood that came over him frequently. 'A myriad of men are born. They labour and sweat and struggle for bread. They squabble and scold and fight. They scramble for little mean advantages over each other. Age creeps upon them. Infirmities follow. Those they love are taken from them. At length ambition is dead, pride is dead; longing for release is in their place. It comes at last,—the only unpoisoned gift earth ever had for them,—and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence. Then another myriad takes their place, and vanishes as they vanished,—to make room for a million more myriads to follow the same arid path through the same desert, and accomplish nothing!'

Suppose that is a true interpretation of this scheme of things! Suppose Jesus of Nazareth is just one more of these aimless myriads making His way across that planet of ours, that will have its brief day and cease to be, and all our race become extinct! Suppose we are to believe what our behaviouristic psychologists teach, that we are nothing but bundles of reactions to certain stimuli, what more have we in life?

There is a soldier in one of Galsworthy's books who, in dying, turns and says to those round about him: 'Waste no breath on me! You cannot help. Who knows, who knows? I have no hope, no faith, but I am adventuring. Good-bye!'

But suppose he is to be just a corpse in a graveyard, what room is there for adventure? Not much. The concluding word is a survival from a more devout period, 'Good-bye.' What does 'Good-bye' mean but 'God be with you'? Only as a man interprets life through the eyes of religion, with faith and hope, can there be any adventure. It makes all the difference in the world what Jesus is, whether this goading ideal is after all a true interpretation of ultimate reality, whether those convictions for which Jesus shed His blood on Calvary are true, whether those standards which He left behind Him are standards which conform to the ultimate structure of things.

3. *Christ, a Vision.*—The last phase of St Paul's experience was vision. 'Who art thou, Lord?' St Paul's answer was: 'The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' Jesus was to him not merely one among the many myriads of men: He was a unique life, who represented and embodied and revealed God. The Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, so far from being a doctrine that we may or may not hold and it does not make much difference, is absolutely fundamental. If Jesus be for us the interpretation of Him who is above and through and in all, then we can look up and really believe in a Christlike God.

Have we ever asked ourselves why we believe in God? Is it not largely because of the life of Jesus of Nazareth? This universe is the kind of a universe that produced Him, and, what is more, this universe is the kind of a universe that was responsive to His faith. He did not go down to defeat with His dreams and His ideals and His convictions. It seemed so. People thought they had buried Him and had done with Him. Instead, the scheme of things has been answering that faith ever since, and He remains a goad, a haunting presence in our world, and the highest lives through succeeding generations have looked up and asked that question, 'Who art thou, Lord?' and answered, 'I see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'—the heavenly vision, the vision of God.

And not only the vision of God, but for Paul it was a vision of what God wanted of him personally. 'To this end have I appeared unto thee, that thou mightest be a minister and a witness both of the things thou hast seen, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee.' It gave him two things—a sense of mission, 'I have appeared unto thee for this thing,' and adequacy for its accomplishment. All through life Paul felt that someone else was with him: 'Not I, but the grace of God that was with me.'

If we are asking just that question: 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Christ always succeeds when a man asks that question in doing exactly what He did for Paul, in concentrating that man's powers. Somebody put it this way: It does not take much of a man to make a Christian, but it takes all that there is of him. Paul said, 'One thing I do,' and it was because of the concentration of his life that he made that tremendous impact upon his day, an impact which still is felt with intense power in our time.[1]

[1] H. S. Coffin.

¶ Amongst an otherwise infinite variety of qualities, one is always the same, one always appears prominent, in the characters of those who have stamped their image and superscription on the history of man. They have been men devoted to one grand object; men not careful and troubled about many things, but to whom one thing, whatever that thing might be, seemed needful; men of one idea, of one pursuit, to which they made all else accessory. And this was the secret of their success. For this unity of purpose is to the mental powers what the burning-glass is to the sun's rays. By concentrating them it makes them irresistible. The faculties which, if scattered, would have been weak and ineffectual, when made to converge on a single object, become a consuming fire. No opposition, unless equally concentrated and therefore equally energetic, can in the long run resist the concentrated force of all the powers of even a single average mind, steadily directed to one darling purpose.[1]

The Revelations of the Way

Acts xxvi. 16.—'To this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee' (R.V.).

In looking back upon his earliest sight of Christ, Paul felt that it had somehow opened a door in him for visions and discoveries coming after. In itself it was very great, but it was not everything. He had seen the Lord, but he had seen Him in such a way as to be sure of seeing Him again; for a Lord of that grace and fullness could not be content to appear for a moment and then to vanish as if He had only one thing to say.

1. *A man's experience of God ought to grow.*—Paul had brooded hotly over the unreasoning doggedness of these Nazarenes, who, against the judgment of the wise, had set up in their hearts as Master, One whose career had ended with the disgrace of crucifixion. But now this same Jesus was revealed in a splendour which robbed the Cross of any suggestion of defeat. And it was not only victory that he saw, but the revelation of a character; for Jesus that day had come down as the defender of His folk in Damascus, a people few and frail, but lying so near to Him that all blows struck at them found out His heart, and that, on the other hand, all majesty and strength that were His were theirs also. That was a tremendous discovery, which changed the face of everything for Paul. It gave him another God—a God not so much making righteous demands on men as coming to their help, a God not of law but of grace. Here truly are the things that angels desire to look into, why should he wish for more? Was it not enough that he had seen, and that now, for all his days, he might remember?

Well, for one thing, the revelation was of God; and once a man has come where God is he discovers himself in a region in which there is no end to amazement. A small man wrestles to do what, after all, is inconsiderable work; but from the man of spacious nature great things come with a certain splendid ease. We may admire his work, but we are scarcely astonished by it—everything about him is of the same sort. It is matter of daily experience that, when a man meets a casual call magnificently, we do not conclude that that is all we shall get from him. We anticipate that in the dim days to come he will play a great man's part. And it is surely less than reason, when we have seen any working of God, so quickly to draw the line and to say, We have had our experience, and now we must remember it, and live upon it. In this case also, through the work we should guess at the greatness of the Worker, at depth, and radiance, and tenderness beyond our sense as yet, which only the future can disclose. If even a man cannot be seen in any single act or period, much more must God move on from event to event in order to convey to our slow minds the assurance of the fullness of His life.

When God spoke to Israel, the revelation was outspread over the changing history of a nation through fifteen hundred years. 'Abraham saw him and was glad'; but if men had halted with Abraham, content to see no more of God, how ill the world would have known its King! And the revelation still moves from age to age; not that new thoughts come so much as fresh thoughts, words which are to-day's message and not of some far-off yesterday.

¶ 'I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four,' says Walt Whitman, 'and each moment of each hour; I find letters from God

[1] C. P. Reichel.

dropped in the streets, and every one is signed by God's name, and I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I go others will punctually come for ever and ever.'

And as the revelation comes from the living God, so it is addressed to man, who is a growing creature. We never continue even for a year at one point. Something in us withers, whilst other needs and tendencies expand; and, moving away from ourselves, we look across, after a while, with a sense of estrangement, to the creature we used to be. That person so hot about things I care nothing for, so zealous in defence of friends whom I dislike, so greedy for pleasures which weary me—that person, somehow or other, was myself; only, for better or worse, I am now translated, and am not the man I was. As circumstances change, new needs assert themselves, and I am driven to lay hold of other powers of good or evil in the world; I look with other eyes and ask for other rewards, and if I am living on the message of yesterday, it cannot be to me what it was, for I am different.

¶ 'Who, if he is honest towards himself,' said Max Müller, 'could say that the religion of his manhood was the same as that of his childhood, or the religion of his old age the same as the religion of his manhood? It is easy to deceive ourselves and to say that the most perfect faith is a childlike faith. Nothing can be truer, and the older we grow the more we learn to understand the wisdom of a child-like faith. But before we can learn that, we have first to learn another lesson, namely, to put away childish things. There is the same glow about the setting sun as there is about the rising sun; but there lies between the two a whole world, a journey through the whole sky and over the whole earth.' [1]

2. *Nothing helps this growth like expectation.*—Many people pass from preacher to preacher, and from book to book, fastening upon new ideas as they go, and dropping them to catch at others; it is doubtful if they grow rich in the course of their pilgrimage. But others have no better prosperity who abide where life has set them, like stones squatting in the river's bed, overflowed only in times of highest spate. In every Church there are men and women who, at some time of revival, have been submerged when the realities of God broke over them, and they had thought for nothing else; and whenever a revival preacher comes they go to hear him, and they sit wondering if this time the water will rise about them again, and give them the sense of the rush and the power of the full stream. They have not been keeping themselves in the love of God, in health and exercise and obedience, but they hope that the crowd and the stir and the hymns will do it for them. That, certainly, is not the hopeful way to progress.

Nothing is more needful than continuous expectation. The mind which is conscious that the world is unexhausted will not fail to see marvels, for each man makes his own world. The artist bears about with him a faculty of appreciation which is the key to a hundred secret chambers of delight. A dull man, who has made up his mind on everything, may grumble even at a change in the vocabulary which he has learned to associate with the things of God; but his neighbour who sits beside him, with sense alert and vigilant, knows that the best word ever spoken about God is too dim and faint for the reality. Which of these two will see? The merely orthodox who remembers and deplores, or the man of faith who anticipates and desires?

Some of us in these days are hindered by perplexities of the intellect. The matters on which we cannot be sure increase, and perhaps no habit needs more to be cultivated than that of magnifying our certainties. There are things which we know, and as we exalt these and live in the power of them, the greater things draw near. They go from strength to strength, from grace to grace, from vision to vision; and it is an honour which our Lord desires that, whilst in our hearts we do justice to the goodness of what we have, we should be looking for the things which are yet to be revealed, for there is no coming to the end of the love of Jesus Christ.

¶ Matthew Henry says here that 'Christ now settled a correspondence with Paul, which He designed afterwards to keep up, and only told him now that he should hear further from Him.'

And so the shadows fall apart,
And so the west winds play,
And all the windows of my heart
I open to Thy day.

[1] *Hibbert Lectures*, 375.

3. *There ought to be growth in a man's testimony.*—There are many ways of bearing witness, but in some way a man is bound to make known what has become so marvellous to himself. Some have no words, and yet their bearing as they go about the common tasks is enough to let their fellows guess at the wells from which they have been drinking. It is a hard world to live in, and if we have discovered a secret which has changed its face for us, we have an obligation to those who do not know.

But Paul, who often was content to tell the story of his own arrest on the Damascus road, felt that he had other words to speak. He was to be a witness of the things wherein his Master would yet appear to him, and thus there is visible in the Epistles a continual growth and movement. There is a message of the door which is never out of date, but new aspects of the grace of Christ are discovered as one lives with Him, and thus the accent changes. Those who wish to help their fellows must always be learning and unlearning. Nothing can be worse than speaking from the memory and not from the heart and from to-day. What helps us most in the distresses of life is not our ideas, however shiningly original, but the immediacy of our contact with the living God; and if we speak as of to-day we can scarcely fail to help, for through us the ever urgent goodwill of the Father will find utterance.

That implies that we must, at all times, be willing to admit that what we saw or what we said yesterday was less than the whole. 'The sea grows always bigger,' said Tintoretto in his old age. There are reaches and remotenesses without end; how shall I ever do justice to that vast expanse? 'I bow the knee,' says Paul, 'and pray that, with all the saints, we may comprehend the length and breadth and depth and height, and that we may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.' With all the saints—for it exceeds the power of the wisest to know—it takes a world of holy men to do justice to the endlessness of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

¶ I could tell you, says one who himself was a great kinsman of the Lord, of friends who have been fifty years in Christ, and though they hold a constant jubilee in the sense of His love, yet they will tell you that they are only scholars in the lowest form, beginning to spell out the alphabet of the grace of our Lord Jesus. After fifty years in Christ, only just beginning to know, only just matriculated in the Academy of Love![1]

It passeth knowledge, that dear love of Thine,
My Saviour, Jesus: yet this soul of mine
Would of Thy love, in all its breadth and length,
Its height and depth, its everlasting strength,
Know more and more.[2]

A Call to Work

Acts xxvi. 17, 18.—'Unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.'

1. St Paul stands before Festus, the Roman Governor, and Herod Agrippa, the King, and relates how he came into contact with the Risen Christ, and was called by Him to the work of his life. Christ says to Paul, 'I send thee.' Beyond all question the secret of Christian service is a fact of this kind at the root of the Christian life; and the absence of this fact is the explanation of the failure which marks so much professional religious work. We can do little or nothing while we are apologizing for Christ, and trying to persuade ourselves, by persuading others, that there is a Christ at all. We cannot do much even when our conviction of His existence, His beauty, His power, His love has become quite genuine and forcible. All our work halts until He has given His commission to us, and we appear simply as His ambassadors, with our letters royal signed and sealed in our own experience, the *I send thee* of our appointment.

The commission grows out of the experience. The man's eyes were opened there on the road to Damascus, and accordingly he is sent to open men's eyes. If he had not seen Jesus, he would have been a poor operator for showing Jesus to others. It is the world's great sorrow at present that, for one reason or another, the eyes of so many are held that they cannot see Him. Men are sorely needed who have seen Him. Holman Hunt saw Him, and painted that wonderful picture 'The Light of the World'; and he said, in speaking of that ravishing vision, 'Renan's works I have read exhaustively; they are, spite of the scholarship which makes them worth reading, simply puerile nonsense,

[1] J. H. Jowett. [2] Mary Shekleton.

with about as much knowledge of his subject as Payne Knight had of the Elgin marbles.' That sounds strong, but what can we say? Fancy an artist trying to paint a portrait without seeing his subject! And in much of the present talk about Jesus, in the writings of some very able men, in the teaching even of some professedly Christian ministers, one is constrained to cry out, 'Why, they are depicting One whom they have never seen. They are trying to open men's eyes, and their own are closed.'

He sends us—this radiant, risen Lord—sends us to open men's eyes to see Him. And by what methods does He expect it to be done? The chief method is *prayer*. Ananias was evidently in prayer when he was sent to open the eyes of Paul himself. And Paul, in his turn, says that in prayer he sought for his friends that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ would give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of their heart enlightened. Another method is *preaching*; before the eyes of the Galatians Paul openly set forth Jesus Christ crucified; and a faithful, earnest presentation of Jesus from week to week has a remarkable effect in opening men's eyes, gradually or suddenly; and when we get tired of setting forth Christ, their eyes close again. But another excellent method of opening the eyes is to *live* Christ.

¶ A man came from Ningpo to a missionary to be baptized, and was asked where he had heard the gospel. 'Oh,' he said, 'I have never heard the gospel, but I have *seen* it; there was an opium smoker in Ningpo with a bad temper, who learned about the Christian religion, and his whole life became changed.'

2. When men's eyes are open to see Jesus, they see at a glance God and themselves; they see their own position, and they see God's relation to them. And what is the result? They turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God.

'From darkness to light.' Darkness? But how came it about that men were ever content to live in the darkness? Just because their eyes were closed. The darkness and the light are both pretty much alike to a blind man. But when their eyes are opened they recognize the darkness to be darkness and they 'turn' to the light. The prodigal, we are told, 'came to himself' in the far country. He had his eyes opened. He saw himself as he really was. He saw his folly and his sin. With what result? He 'turned.' 'I will arise and go to my father.' Paul himself saw a great light on the way to Damascus. It blinded his physical sight. It opened the eyes of his soul. He saw Jesus and knew Him for the Lord. With what result? He 'turned.' The persecutor of the faith became a preacher of it.

When poor creatures hand themselves over to vice, to covetousness, to selfishness, one knows at once it must be blindness. Who would walk into the Gate of Hell with his eyes open, or embrace Satan, knowing it to be Satan? And when the multitude of the indifferent live without God and without hope in the world, who can question that it is because their eyes are closed? If the unfortunate were not blind they would never choose the dark and darkening lot which is theirs instead of the inheritance among the saints in light.

3. With this commission to open men's eyes in our hands common compassion impels us to miss voluntarily no opportunity. Paul was not in the habit of waiting for a pulpit or a set meeting. Where he found blind eyes he tried at once to open them. Agrippa did not seem a likely subject—the petty tetrarch to whom Claudius had granted the title of king, the representative of the perverse Herods, weak and worldly, combining the faults of Jew and Gentile, of Greek and Roman. And by his side was his sister, Bernice, who had been the wife of her uncle, was now the wife of her brother, and afterwards became the mistress of Vespasian. Besides, Paul was before him as a prisoner before a judge, not as a preacher before a congregation. There is no better instance of being active and aggressive in season and out of season.

¶ Mr Reader Harris was a Queen's Counsel who practised at the Parliamentary Bar. Raised up from illness by the prayer of faith, he became a spiritual leader to others. He was a most remarkable and inspiring man, whose character and work I have never seen properly commemorated. He had a distinguished bearing and an easy delivery, which, added to a singular sweetness of temper and genuine warmth of heart, made him, next to Henry Drummond, the most attractive man I ever

knew. He was irresistible. On one occasion a lady urged him to come to a dance. 'But,' he said, 'I never like to go where I cannot do as I please.' 'But you may,' she said. 'May I say just what comes into my mind?' he asked. 'Of course you may,' she replied quite delighted. He went to the dance and charmed every one by his manner and friendliness. Then he stepped forward among the dancers and suddenly said: 'Our kind hostess has given me leave to say what I please.' Every one was startled, but interested. And then in the most winning way he preached Christ to them, and urged them all to seek a full salvation in Him.[1]

Paul proceeds, in his eager, vehement way, to grapple with the king, to appeal to him as a Jew. He will start from the prophets. If he can get Agrippa's confession of faith in them, he will quickly land him at the Cross and the Risen Christ, as the discourses in this book show again and again. Agrippa seems to see what will happen, and, with a rebuke, half-scornful, but perhaps also half-regretful, he says: 'This is persuasion by short-cuts to make me a Christian.' What an outburst of passionate longing the remark evoked from this shackled prisoner. 'I would pray to God that by short cut or long you and all these might be as I am, but for these fetters!' There is the secret of the Christian heart. Such is the experience of Christ that, notwithstanding all sufferings and drawbacks, it would have all the world like itself. As Christ enters and possesses a human soul, it becomes a burning centre of desire and effort to bring every one else to Him.

The Personality of Evil

Acts xxvi. 18.—'To turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.'

Christ has committed Himself without reserve to the reality of the kingdom of evil, to the personality and work of the devil and his angels. This does not seem to be a mere acquiescence in the terminology, or even the beliefs, of His contemporaries. He had seen Satan as lightning fallen from heaven. He met him in the wilderness. His experience of the Evil One was immediate, direct, personal, like His experience of the ever present Father. In closest companionship with the Lord's own chosen Twelve moves this dread influence, eager to sift as wheat, prompting the unhallowed suggestion, whispering in the ear of Judas. The Jews who resisted Messiah were inspired by their father the devil. Their works were his works. The Passion consummated the conflict which the Temptation had begun. To Christ Himself it was a direct agony and death-struggle, wherein the prince of this world was cast out.

It is this experience on the part of Jesus of the direct antagonism of a personal spirit of evil which is of primary importance in determining the view of sin which meets us in the New Testament.

1. The power of Satan is the key to a right understanding of the Galilean ministry. All Christ's activity is of a piece with the main purpose of His life. The Lord's anointed is the Ransomer, the Redeemer, the Liberator. Salvation, of which redemption from Egyptian bondage is the ancient analogue, is not the restoration of spiritual health, the cure of the soul's disease. It is the emancipation of slaves, the liberation of captives, the opening of the prison to them that are bound. The acceptable year, which Jesus preached at Nazareth and consummated on Calvary, is *annus Domini*, the year of release.

This is apparent even in Christ's treatment of physical disease. We miss altogether the principle which binds the healing of the sick to the proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom if we are content to express the work of Jesus for the souls of men in terms of His ministry to the body; to use metaphors like the leprosy of sin, the sick will, the Physician of the soul. Jesus is not a physician but a faith-healer. His struggle with disease is part of His conflict with the works of the devil. It is purely spiritual, a direct dealing of personalities. His attitude towards bodily infirmity is that which the Church needs to recover in this present age, in which it shall yet again be true that 'they shall lay hands on the sick,' and, in response to strong, believing prayer, 'they shall recover.'

But if this is true of Jesus' dealings with the sick, how much more conspicuous is His recognition of the presence of evil spirits when He is confronted with those who are definitely

[1] R. F. Horton, *An Autobiography*, 106.

spoken of as possessed with demons. Here it is futile to disregard the plain meaning of the narratives with which the Gospels abound. No doubt those sad cases of cerebral disturbance, whether or not they have their equivalent in the modern life of the West, were capable of scientific diagnosis, and might have yielded to the treatment of the alienist. But once again this was not the side from which Jesus approached the sufferer. Behind the physical phenomena of mental disease He saw the work of evil spirits. He opposed might to might, influence to influence, personality to personality. With His word He cast out the demons. Is it conceivable that Christ was wrong; that He identified Himself with the spiritual methods of strolling Jewish exorcists, which can have no place in an enlightened age; that, in a matter so fundamental to the whole conception of the spiritual salvation whereof He was Himself the author, He was not speaking out of the fullness of a direct experience when He cried, 'Thou dumb and deaf spirit come out of the child'? Surely we cannot for a moment suppose that the real issues of the conflict in which He felt Himself to be engaged were veiled in a mist of mythological error. All was done with the utmost deliberation. The command to publish the gospel of the Kingdom was associated with power to heal diseases and with authority over unclean spirits. And along the path of this beneficent ministry in Galilee He moved forward to that Cross which was at once the supreme service and the final agony. 'The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me.' It was not merely the imagination of an ardent apostle that could represent Calvary as a triumph over unseen personalities, princedoms, powers. It is the witness of the consciousness of Jesus Himself that He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and that in the supreme hour of His victory He bruised the head of the serpent and trod upon all the power of the enemy.

2. There never was an age in which it was more vitally necessary that we should get back to these primary truths, to the Biblical way of regarding sin, than the times through which we are now passing. We have wallowed too long in the trough of a scientific reaction against the unsophisticated, spiritual view of life which belongs to a simpler society. Our biological habit of thought has sought to discover natural law in the spiritual world, and it would probably be true to say that theology and science have been alike depraved in the process. We have eagerly availed ourselves of the cruder sides of Augustinianism, those very imperfections of a system which, for want of the category of personality, inadequately interprets St Paul, in order to represent sin as a bad heredity, a transmitted character, a disease of the race. And the result is that we have excitedly proclaimed what we have taken for Christian teaching as an anticipation of scientific theory, until changes in scientific theory have come as a peremptory rebuke to our rashness.

Meanwhile the need of the human heart for a spiritual interpretation of life is urging its imperious claim. What is the meaning, for example, of the spread of spiritualism, of the growth of Christian science? Why the lament that exorcism should have fallen into disuse? Why the insistence on faith and prayer for the banishment of sickness? The future will see a marvellous reassertion of personality as a controlling force in the universal life. We shall see the re-establishment of those conditions which will turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and prepare them for the republication of the old gospel of the Kingdom, the ancient message of reconciliation and release, of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, which to Jews is a scandal and to Greeks folly, but to the believer is the wisdom and the power of God.

A spiritual presence, not o'ercrowing the human spirit, but working from within the personality—that is the secret both of the life in Christ and of the life without Him. 'I, yet not I,' a lesson that must be learnt, not by a careful analysis of thought and action and motive, but in living, from the twofold witness of Scripture and daily experience. That is the only source of a living theology. A great deal has been said and written about sin which entirely leaves out of account the activity of evil spirits. It is a warp in human nature, a failure to moralize the material, a blundering quest for God.

¶ In a letter to his friend, F. J. A. Hort, Maurice writes: 'You think you do not find a distinct recognition of the devil's personality

in my books. I am sorry if it is so. I do agree with my dear friend Charles Kingsley, and admire him for the boldness with which he has said that the devil is shamming dead, but that he was never busier than now. I do not know what he is by theological arguments, but I know by what I feel. I am sure there is one near me accusing God and my brethren to me. He is not myself; I should go mad if I thought he was. He is near my neighbours; I am sure he is not identical with my neighbours. I must hate them if I believed he was. But oh! most of all, I am horror-struck at the thought that we may confound him with God; the perfect darkness with the perfect light. I dare not deny that it is an evil will that tempts me; else I should begin to think evil is in God's creation, and is not the revolt from God, resistance to Him. If he is an evil will, he must, I think, be a person.'[1]

¶ 'I specially remember,' says Spurgeon, 'a certain narrow and crooked lane along which I was walking one day when I was seeking the Saviour. On a sudden it seemed as if the very floodgates of hell had been opened: my head became a perfect pandemonium: ten thousand evil spirits seemed to be holding carnival within my brain: and I held my mouth lest I should give utterance to the words of blasphemy that were poured into my ears. That temptation passed away, but, ere many days, it was renewed again; and, when I was in prayer, or when I was reading the Bible, these blasphemous thoughts would pour in upon me more than at any other time.

'I consulted with an aged godly man about it,' he says. 'The old man asked me if I hated such thoughts. I told him that I did indeed. "Then," he replied, "they are not *your* thoughts, Charles; serve them as the old parish officers used to do with the vagrants; whip them and send them to their own parish. Send them back to the devil to whom they belong, for they are not *yours*." ' And Spurgeon adds: 'I was greatly consoled.'

A deathly depression settles down upon the spirit when one is brought face to face with the realities of the life of our great cities. To mingle, for example, with the crowd which assembles night by night in the bars and public-houses, to realize all that is meant by the widespread ramifications of an evil more deadly than drunkenness into immediate contact with which one is thus brought, to compare all the possibilities of high social effort with the wreck of human society, fills those who have encountered it with a cynical despair, unless they come to it in the power of an unconquerable hope which goes forth to seek and to save the lost. Think of that cruel indignation which lays hold of a man when he contemplates himself, knows himself to be good, has rejoiced in his efforts after righteousness and brotherly service, but, alas! has identified himself with some loathsome offence which he cannot palliate or excuse. Then comes the reconciling, liberating power of God in the blessed words of the evangel. There is no teaching more full of hope for human nature than the Christian doctrine of sin. It is the wonderful assurance that 'there is no part of the man which is not immortal and Divine when once it is given to God.' Christ can save you, Christ can reconcile you, Christ can emancipate you now.

He comes! the pris'ners to relieve,
in Satan's bondage held;
The gates of brass before him burst
the iron fetters yield.

¶ Those who have travelled much in the Western Highlands will often have been witnesses of what is one of the most glorious transformations that Nature affords. For days, it may be, we have sojourned in that land of shrouding mist and encompassing waters, and, enduring the dull monotony of leaden skies and gloomy soulless mountains, we have asked ourselves how the imagination could ever have gone so far astray as to invest this unresponsive scene with the associations of romance. But some evening the wind drops and the rain ceases to fall. The sun, as it dips to meet the ocean, dispels the clouds that all day long have veiled its face. Then the whole scene glistens with glorious light. The rocky coasts glow like burnished bronze, and beyond, couching in mystic masses or uplifted like airy spires to heaven, rise the majestic hills. Such is the soul which has been turned by a miracle of heavenly might from the power of Satan to the kingdom of God.[1]

[1] *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, ii. 21.

[1] J. G. Simpson, *Christian Ideals*, 35.

Sanctified by Faith

Acts xxvi. 18.—'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.'

Thomas Goodwin says 'faith begins all, and ends all and manageth all till we come to heaven.' And that is the teaching here. We specially associate faith with justification, the initial act of consecration to God, but it is by no means confined to it. On the contrary, it abides as a permanent element in the religious life. It is the instrument not only of justification, but of sanctification as well. It is the presupposition of all the higher religious virtues, and enters indissolubly into the making of the Christian life.

Faith is not the only means of sanctification. The Cross of Christ sanctifies, the Holy Spirit sanctifies, prayer sanctifies. But there is another channel through which sanctification flows into the spirit, the soul, and the body of the Christian, and this is the grace of Faith. 'According to your faith be it unto you,' Jesus used to say to the sick and impotent folk who sought His healing when He was on earth. The exalted Christ had a similar message for Saul the persecutor, when He changed him into Paul the apostle. 'I send thee unto the Gentiles,' He told His new-found bondman and freeman, 'that they may receive an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me.' And in the last word of Peter which the Book of Acts records, that spoken to the Jerusalem Council, we listen to the same note. God, Peter declared, 'made no distinction' between us Jews and those strangers and foreigners who had been drawn to Him from heathendom, 'purifying' or 'cleansing their hearts by faith,' just as He did and does our own. According to our faith is our spiritual health. We are sanctified by faith in Christ.

¶ The work which the Lord had assigned her was wholly different from what she had anticipated. God often works thus. Thus, at the foot of the Alps, when she thought her great business was to make ointments, and cut linen, and bind up wounds, and tend the sick, and teach poor children the alphabet and the catechism (important vocations to those whom Providence calls to them), she uttered a word from her burdened heart, without knowing or thinking how widely it would affect the interests of humanity, or through how many distant ages it would be re-echoed. And that word was, Sanctification by Faith. Both the thing and the manner of the thing struck those who heard her with astonishment. Sanctification itself was repugnant; and sanctification by *faith* inexplicable. In the Protestant Church, it would have been hardly tolerable; but in the Roman Catholic Church, which is characterized by ceremonial observances, the toleration of a sentiment which ascribes the highest results of inward experience to *faith alone* was impossible. So that, instead of being regarded as an humble and devout Catholic, as she supposed herself to be, she found herself suddenly denounced as a heretic. But the Word was in her heart, formed there by infinite wisdom; and in obedience to that deep and sanctified conviction which constitutes the soul's inward voice, she uttered it; uttered it *now*, and uttered it *always*, 'though bonds and imprisonments awaited her.' [1]

1. There are two ways in which faith produces holiness of life—it brings the believer into fellowship with Christ, and it is energetic through love.

(1) *Fellowship.*—We know what we mean by communion or intercourse with our fellow-men. By the written word, by word of mouth, even by the silent touch or look, a man enters into relations with his fellow. The one mind acts and reacts upon the other; it gives and receives; the whole personality may be changed by contact with another, whether for better or for worse.

Fellowship with Christ is not essentially different. However mystic and transcendental this fellowship may appear to some minds, it will not be denied that, in proportion as it is realized in any Christian experience, it must prove a powerful stimulus to Christlike living. No man, be his temperament what it may, can understand and believe in the loving-kindness of God, without being stirred up to strenuous effort after moral heroism. The man who earnestly believes himself to be a son of God must needs try to be Godlike. Even if in spiritual character he be of the unimaginative, matter-of-fact type, he will feel his obligation

[1] T. C. Upham, *The Life of Madame Guyon*, 155.

none the less; it will appear to him a plain question of sincerity, common honesty, and practical consistency. In comparison with the mystic, he may have to plod on his way without aid of the eagle wings of a fervid religious imagination; nevertheless as we observe him we see him walk on persistently without fainting.

There thus grows up a mystic union with Christ, an identification of the believer and his Redeemer, so that Christ's acts become his acts. There is a beautiful reciprocity and interchange of giving and receiving, love answering to love, and life to life. In this self-forgetful surrender the old ego with its inner strife and trembling vanishes, and a new spiritual manhood takes its place, of which we can give no other explanation than that which Paul offers us, as the secret of his own experience—'I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.' 'Faith in Christ' means 'life in Christ.' And this complete yielding of self and vital union with the Saviour is at once man's supreme ideal and the source of all moral greatness.

¶ If we pour a glass of wine into a glass of water, and mix them, the water will be in the wine, and the wine in the water. So in like manner all that we do, while our own acts, should be manifestations of the indwelling Saviour.[1]

(2) *Love.*—In Galatians Paul speaks of faith 'energizing through love.' Now if faith be really an energetic principle, and if it indeed works from love as its motive, then we may expect from its presence in the soul right conduct of the highest order. Out of the energy of faith will spring all sorts of right works, and those works will not be vitiated by base motives, as in religions of fear. The only question therefore remaining is: Are the Apostle's statements concerning faith true? Is faith an energetic force? Does it work from love as its motive?

There should be no hesitation in admitting the truth of both statements. That faith is an energetic principle all human experience attests. Faith, no matter what its object, ever shows itself mighty as a propeller to action. If a man believes a certain enterprise to be possible and worthy, his faith will stir him up to persistent effort for its achievement. The eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews settles the question as to the might inherent in faith. In this might all faith shares, therefore the faith of Christians in God.

But why should the faith of Christians work by love? Why not by some other motive, say fear, which has been such a potent factor in the religious history of mankind? Is there any intrinsic necessary connection between Christian faith and love? There is, and it is due to the Christian idea of God. All turns on that. The God of our faith is a God of grace. He is our Father in heaven, and we, however unworthy, are His children. Therefore our faith inevitably works by love. First and obviously by the love of gratitude for mercy received. For, whereas the question of a religion of fear is: 'Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord that I may appease his wrath,' faith says: 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?' But not through the love of gratitude alone; also through the love of adoration for the highest conceivable ethical ideal realized in the Divine nature. God is love, self-communicating, self-sacrificing. To believe in such a God is to make love the law of life.

2. 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.' In just the same way faith acts upon the heart; it stirs it all up, and little by little it changes its whole nature. It never lies idle but keeps spreading and never leaves off till it has leavened the whole lump, and brought it all into the same nature with itself. It cannot rest whilst there is a single bad passion remaining in the heart.

Through the faith of Christ we are to master envy, jealousy, resentment, pride and vanity. We are to refrain from indulgence in fretfulness, anxiety, and care. Faith's possibilities appear also on the positive side of spiritual life in the graces with which the new nature is adorned. The beauties of holiness become increasingly visible in conduct and character. The patience and gentleness of the Lord Jesus show themselves in temper and behaviour. A growing measure of Christ-likeness gets to be the dominant feature in our life.

We can never too often remember, nor too simply, that the true power of true faith lies

[1] Hudson Taylor.

in its Object. Therefore let us recollect the Object. Let us habitually say within the soul the creed of life: 'I believe in God, in God in Christ, in the Christ of God.'

¶ There is a section of Miss Nightingale's *Suggestions for Thought* called 'Cassandra.' It is the story of a girl's imprisoned life and is in part autobiographical. It ends with the death of the heroine. 'Let neither name nor date be placed on her grave, still less the expression of regret or of admiration; but simply the words, *I believe in God.*'[1]

He lives, He loves, He knows;
Nothing that thought can dim;
He gives the very best to those
Who leave the choice to Him.

An expositor of the First Epistle of St John, Professor Robert Law of Toronto, says that the Apostle's mode of thinking and writing in the Epistle is 'spiral.' His reasoning does not move from point to point in a straight line. Rather, it is like a winding staircase, always revolving round the same centre, always recurring to the same topics, but at a higher level. So the Christian's life of faith is spiral. It commenced when he abandoned the old centre for the new, self for God in Christ. It progresses and climbs upward, as he revolves about the same Centre. The first surrender is repeated in innumerable subsequent surrenders. The act of trust by which, fleeing from ourselves, we sought the Good Physician, becomes the habit and attitude of trust, by which we return again and again to One who more and more delivers and empowers. The staircase winds round and round Christ, and always at loftier and heavenlier levels.

¶ Alexander Smellie says: 'I go back, across many years, to the time when, in Edinburgh, I was leaving school for college, and Mr Moody was in the city, and, at the close of one of his meetings in the Assembly Hall, he had me in the company of James Robertson, of Newington, and that gracious man of God was talking with me about the things which matter most. "Do you remember," he asked, "the Greek of Christ's *Come unto Me* in the ending of the eleventh chapter of Matthew?" And I had to answer "No." Then he showed me how, in the original, there is no verb of action, *Come*, although "Come" is the sweetest and most alluring of verbs—how there is only an adverb, "Hither." No strenuous movement is required, merely an inclination of mind and heart, an orientation or bending of the soul towards a Saviour, who is already present to give His blessing of rest. And now *Hither to Me* seems the sum and substance of religion. When you are harassed by anxieties; when it costs you much to confess your Lord before men; when you are in danger of yielding to unkindness, or to bad temper, or to impatience, or to evil of any sort, He is beside you, He is within you, saying, *Hither to Me.* You lean towards Him; you recognize anew His sufficiency; and you are more than conqueror through Him who loved and loves you.

'Wherefore, faith sanctifies.'[1]

[1] Sir E. T. Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 490.

The Heavenly Vision

A New Year Address

Acts xxvi. 19.—'Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.'

St Paul had one supreme date in his calendar. He referred everything to that transcendent hour when, to use his own words, 'it pleased God to reveal his Son in me.' Suddenly there flashed upon his spirit the glory of Jesus Christ. The eternal Voice came pealing into his conscience, the awful Presence flooded his soul, and he recognized with unspeakable certainty his despised, rejected, persecuted King. The Pharisee fell prone to earth, blinded by the heavenly vision which transformed him into an apostle. But his fall was for the rising of many in Israel, and his darkness was a light to lighten the Gentiles. It is true, indeed, that the New Testament represents Paul's overwhelming experience as something abnormal and miraculous. Yet there remains a sense in which every believer's faith dates from a heavenly vision.

1. There are many ways in which a heavenly vision may come into the life of a man or woman. The vision may come suddenly and unaccountably, so that it is felt to come straight from above without human instrumentality. But more often the new insight

[1] *Lift Up Your Heart*, 95.

into Divine things comes through some outward agency. It may be that the reading of a great book throws a new light, like that of dawn, over all things. Or it may be that some words of Scripture, familiar and perhaps almost unnoticed for many years, suddenly become clear and shining and powerful. So it was in the life of Augustine.

¶ One day in my third year at college, a day I remember as well as Paul must have remembered afterwards the day on which he went to Damascus, I happened to find amongst a parcel of books a volume of poems in paper boards. It was called 'Lyrical Ballads,' and I read first one and then the whole book. It conveyed to me no new doctrine, and yet the change it wrought in me could only be compared with that which is said to have been wrought on Paul himself by the Divine apparition. It excited a movement and a growth which went on till, by degrees, all the systems which enveloped me like a body gradually decayed from me and fell away into nothing. God is nowhere formally deposed, and Wordsworth would have been the last man to say that he had lost his faith in the God of his fathers. But his real God is not the God of the Church, but the God of the hills, the abstraction Nature, and to this my reverence was transferred. Instead of an object of worship which was altogether artificial, remote, never coming into genuine contact with me, I had now one which I thought to be real, one in which literally I could live and move and have my being, an actual fact present before my eyes. God was brought from that heaven of the books, and dwelt on the downs in the far-away distances, and in every cloud-shadow which wandered across the valley. Wordsworth unconsciously did for me what every religious reformer has done,—he re-created my Supreme Divinity; substituting a new and living spirit for the old deity, once alive, but gradually hardened into an idol.[1]

¶ *A Gentleman in Prison* is the story, written in prison, of a Japanese criminal, Tokichi Ishii, who was convicted, on his own confession, of murder and afterwards hanged. Dr Kelman calls it 'one of the world's great stories. There is in it something of the glamour of *The Arabian Nights*, and something of the hellishness of Poe's *Tales of Mystery*.'

[1] Mark Rutherford, *An Autobiography*, 18.

But the chief interest it has for us is as a conversion document. Here is how the prisoner tells the story of the great change that took place in his life: 'One day I got tired of sitting by myself with nothing to do, and just for the sake of putting in the time, I took the New Testament down from the shelf, and, with no intention of seriously looking into it, I glanced at the beginning and then at the middle. . . . I went on, and my attention was next taken by these words: "And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." I stopped: I was stabbed to the heart, as if pierced by a five-inch nail. What did the verse reveal to me? Shall I call it the love of the heart of Christ? Shall I call it His compassion? I do not know what to call it. I only know that with an unspeakably grateful heart I believed. Through this simple sentence I was led into the whole of Christianity.'

But most often the vision comes through the word or ministry of some human messenger. It may come through the appeal of a great preacher, or through the quieter word of a friend which sinks into the mind, and remains, and bears fruit as the days pass. Or it may happen that the seed is sown by the hand of a stranger who is quite unconscious of the great thing that he has done.

¶ John Bunyan tells that it was so in his life, for once, as he passed down a street in Bedford: 'I came where there were three or four poor women sitting at a door in the sun, and talking about the things of God. . . . They were far above, out of my reach, for their talk was about a new birth, the work of God on their hearts. . . . And methought they spake as if joy did make them speak; and with such pleasantness of Scripture language, and with such appearance of grace in all they said that they were to me as if they had found a new world.'

But there are times as well as agencies to consider. Indeed sometimes the coming of a special season may itself be the cause of the vision's appearing. It may be a time of family joy or sorrow, or some deeply personal experience of testing or loss; it may be some great national crisis, that raises our thoughts from the common things of life and prepares our hearts to recognize the vision. Or it may be a solemn Communion season. Or yet again

it may be the coming of Christmas, with all that it recalls, both of our childhood and of the Child who came to save His people. And before the uplift of heart which Christmas brings is over the Old Year passes, and a New Year begins with its measureless possibilities of good and of evil, of joy and of pain. Thus after looking back, we are called to look forward; and if at this season, when there is so much to unseal and purify our vision, we have caught any fresh glimpse of the Divine glory, we must lay upon our conscience the firm resolve that, in the days of the New Year, we shall not be disobedient to the heavenly vision.

2. For that, after all, is the one vital matter; not the form of the vision but our treatment of it is what concerns us so greatly. And here there are three chief possibilities :—

(1) The first possibility is the gradual fading of the vision into forgetfulness and obscurity. This may have various causes, and the process may be speedy or slow, as our Lord showed in the parable of the Sower. The hindrance may be that hardness, that slowness of an unspiritual nature to receive impressions, which prevents the truth from ever striking root. Or it may be an instability of character which causes first enthusiasm and then recoil before difficulty or persecution. Or the hindrance may lie in the effects of worldliness, increasing with the passage of time and strangling the plant which had struck root and had begun to grow. It may be a swift process or a gradual one; but in the end the result is the same—the tender shoot dies, and the vision fades into the light of common day.

(2) But there is a second possibility. The great experience may be kept for onself, as if it were too precious to be sullied by the gaze of the world. Christians who have seen something of the Divine vision have often withdrawn into the solitude of the desert or the monastery in order to preserve its brightness and to behold it in ever greater purity. But, in so doing, they not only have in many cases impaired their own spiritual life, and become one-sided in their thoughts of God, but they have deprived the world of its due share in the vision—a share which it so greatly needs. Thus the poet represents King Arthur as lamenting the fact that his knights, who were pledged to succour the oppressed and prepare for the coming of righteousness among men, had been drawn away from their task by the aspiration after a purely personal holiness :—

Another hath beheld it afar off,
And leaving human wrongs to right themselves,
Cares but to pass into the silent life.
And one hath had the vision face to face,
And now his chair desires him here in vain,
However they may crown him otherwhere.
'And some among you held, that if the King
Had seen the sight he would have sworn the vow :
Not easily, seeing that the King must guard
That which he rules, and is but as the hind
To whom a space of land is given to plow.
Who may not wander from the allotted field
Before his work be done.'

(3) But there remains the third and greatest possibility, that which is named in our text—obedience. And this, we know now, does not mean an individual pursuit of the vision, in the hope that its radiance may return, while we neglect the nearer and simpler tasks of life. The true form of loyalty or obedience is quite other than this. We may learn from Paul's life-story what that form is. From the vision on the Damascus road and the long time of intense thought which followed in the solitude of Arabia, he came back into the busy, noisy, confused, eager world of Greek and Jewish life. He came back to face the hostility and scorn of the Jews, and the suspicion and slowness of apprehension of those Christians who were still too much bound by Jewish traditions to accept his great message of Christian liberty. He came back to face unparalleled toils and hardships on his missionary journeys, and to take up a daily burden heavier than that of any hardship or persecution—'anxiety for all the churches.' That and much more is included in the simple claim that he had been obedient to the heavenly vision.

¶ Perspective is often wanting in spiritual vision, and the sense of proportion is marred or destroyed. Benozzo Gozzoli, in the window adornments of the Ricasoli Palace, realized, as great masters had never done before, the power of perspective, and in doing so added keenness to his sense of proportion. Time, a narrow national aspiration, the slavish fulfilment of a preparatory law, a hard and rigorous mono-

theism, had widened out suddenly before Paul's astonished gaze into the wide horizons of eternity, and the tender and glorious landscapes of the Kingdom of God. Great thoughts henceforth led him necessarily to the careful fulfilment of small duties. If he soars into the seventh heaven henceforth, it is to bring down the energy and love and considerate sympathy by which to help the runaway slave; to send kindly messages of reproof or affection to the pious ladies of Rome or Philippi; to open the treasures of his sympathetic tenderness to his young men converts—his 'own sons'; to arrange for the offertories in Macedonia and Corinth; to manage the progress of his trade of tent-making so that he might honestly pay his way. Half the thoughts of men are out of proportion.

For us also obedience to the vision means a return to the ordinary ways of life. It does not point to such trials and sufferings as awaited Paul, but it does point to faithfulness in small things and in common circumstances. As the days pass, and the New Year in its turn grows old, the vision may indeed lose something of its first freshness. But we need not therefore be unfaithful to it. We cannot live always on the heights of vision; but, if our wills are true and steadfast, we can carry out on the levels of common life that which we have learned on the heights.

That is indeed a great lesson—that we are responsible to God and to our fellows for the use we make of the truth and beauty which have been revealed to us. But that is not all. Great as is the power of the human will and human faithfulness, there is a greater power, nor are we left to our own unaided capacity of obedience. For Paul goes on to tell in what way his obedience to the heavenly vision had been achieved, and how he had been upborne in so many great trials and difficulties. 'Having,' he says, 'obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day.' Yes, if we obtain this help, we also, weak as we are, may stand through the coming year; and if we stand by this help and in this obedience the vision will not pass out of our lives, but the unknown days will bring us

> New perils past, new sins forgiven,
> New thoughts of God, new hopes of Heaven.

Dreams and Action

Acts xxvi. 19.—'I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.'

Which is the more valuable member of a community, which does more for his own life and for the progress of mankind—the practical man or the dreamer? The question is barren enough, yet it seems to be a never-ending subject of debate. The practical and the visionary temperaments stand in sharp contrast, and neither of them quite understands the other. Men of action as a rule look down upon the mere thinker. They regard him as an idler, content to live a useless life in a fanciful world of his own devising, and mistaking his dreams and speculations for realities. They have no sympathy with the frame of mind which refuses to act until it can satisfy its own ideals.

We may admit that individual thinkers sometimes seem incompetent and useless members of society, but we must not forget how important is the function which speculation and thought serve in the world's progress. They provide the ideas and ideals on which progress ultimately depends, and without them the practical life would often be aimless. One illuminating idea, one stimulating ideal, may influence the world's history more than the efforts of thousands of practical men can ever do. The truth of the matter is that both elements are necessary for human progress. It is as wrong to undervalue the importance of sound common sense and resolute effort, as it is to fail to recognize the services of the thinker, the dreamer, the idealist, the enthusiast. No life, indeed, can be thoroughly great or full which does not combine a certain amount of both elements. A life of dreams mingled with, or alternating with, a life of action means a life of singular charm and influence.

¶ A seventeenth-century writer, Owen Felltham, says: 'I will neither always be busy and doing, nor ever shut up in nothing but thoughts. Yet that which some would call idleness, I will call the sweetest part of my life, and that is my thinking.'

1. These thoughts are specially full of suggestiveness when applied to religion. Contrast two familiar aspects of the religious life—the practical and the mystical. The practical

man aims at doing his plain duty towards God and his fellow-man: the mystic, by a process of inward contemplation, aims at putting himself into direct communion with God. The contrast is familiar to us in the pages of the Bible. There is the religion of the Law and the religion of the Prophets, the former consisting in the plain literal observance of God's commandments, moral and ceremonial, the latter supplying a spiritual ideal based on visions of God and on direct revelations from God, which served to raise Israel out of the stagnation of a mere ceremonial obedience. In the New Testament, again, there is the religion of Martha and the religion of Mary. Our Lord tells us that Mary had chosen the good part, and these words have sometimes had the effect of making men a little unjust towards Martha. We must not forget that she was a religious woman, and if there was a touch of worldliness or petulance in her complaint against Mary, still her anxiety was the outcome of her affection for her Master. Martha's practical housewifely cares might be regarded as being for her a form of religious observance. Our Lord did not condemn them, and we cannot doubt that in His eyes Martha's life, as well as Mary's, had a definite religious value. If we take the lives of the two sisters as representing allegorically the practical and the mystical sides of Christianity, the inference which we are intended to draw seems to be, not that the practical life is necessarily inferior, but that each of the two lives gains by being brought into contact with the other.

¶ 'Happy is that house,' says St Bernard, 'and blessed is that congregation, where Martha still complains of Mary.'

¶ 'Martha,' says St Teresa, 'was a true saint though she did not achieve Contemplation. What more could one wish than like her to have Christ often in one's house, and to serve Him and to sit at His very table? Had Martha been rapt like Mary, who would have given the Lord to eat? Those of the Active life are the soldiers who fight in the battles; those of the Contemplative are the standard-bearers who carry aloft the banner of humanity, across which lies the Cross. And remember, if the standard-bearer drops the standard, the battle has to be lost.'

2. Nowhere do we find the combination of the practical and visionary aspects of religion so clearly displayed as in the life and character of our Lord Himself. He is at once the great Healer, the Jesus who went about doing good and showed His compassion for men in the most practical way by curing their diseases, and at the same time the great Prophet of Nazareth, whose message revealed to men their Heavenly Father and suggested the mysterious possibilities which might come to them from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. How intensely practical, how full of the sanity of common sense, Jesus Christ can be! He does not live in a fictitious world; He does not attempt to blink the ugly realities of human life; He recognizes the inevitableness of occasions of stumbling; He is under no optimistic illusions about the ultimate success of His mission. When John the Baptist sent disciples to ask, 'Art thou he that should come?' it was to practical results that Christ appealed. But side by side with the Christ of practical aims there was another and a very different personality. Was ever anything more violently opposed to the common sense of the average man than are some of the principles which Christ laid down? Much of His teaching has ceased to be startling to us only because it is so familiar. We cannot help feeling how paradoxical, for instance, how absolutely impracticable, is His injunction to turn the other cheek to the smiter, or how visionary is His description of a kingdom in which the blessed are those who are reviled and persecuted. The wonderful thing is that Christ's clear practical insight seems to take up and assimilate these visions of a regenerated human nature and of a transformed society without producing any sense of incongruity or discrepancy. Action and dreams were absolutely fused into one in His personality. He did not live the active and the contemplative life by fits and turns: He lived them both simultaneously. Think of the amount of practical work crowded into the three years of His ministry. Think again of the visions of His Father which possessed His mind through it all. Is it not evident that the sense of a continuous communion with God coloured His most ordinary actions and His most trifling words?

3. That was a life which can never be repeated on earth. Yet is it not true that the followers of Christ have frequently exhibited, each in his own degree, this strange combina-

tion of the practical and the visionary? It is singularly conspicuous in St Paul. The Apostle might have been called, and no doubt was called by those who had no sympathy with his aims, a mere visionary, a mere fanatical enthusiast, but all that we know about him refutes this charge. He had, indeed, other strange and mystical experiences besides the vision to which his conversion was due: he was caught up to the third heaven and heard unspeakable words, and throughout his later years he believed with a sincerity which it is impossible to doubt that he lived in a close mystical union with Christ. When he was on his defence before Agrippa, Festus, noticing perhaps some excitability in his manner, thought him mad. Yet few men have shown a saner judgment or a sounder common sense in all practical matters. Few men have done more active work for Christ, or have exhibited greater practical insight into character, or have attained a higher success in organization and administration. Paul is one of the men who have known how to intermingle in their lives dreams and action: he has shown us how possible it is in the service of Christ to combine the practical management of affairs with the enthusiasm of the visionary.

4. There is a lesson here for all, the lesson that it is a positive duty to try to combine spiritual ideals with the practical service of God and of man; in other words, to try to intermingle dreams and action in our religious life. Two things have to be borne in mind.

(1) Visionary enthusiasms, spiritual experiences, mystical aspirations can never be of the slightest value unless accompanied by practical religion. A religion that does not influence conduct stands self-condemned. There is nothing on which Christ is more emphatic than this. 'Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?' 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.' The indispensable condition, the one justification, of the visionary life is obedience.

¶ The Quakers, like all healthy positive mystics, do not make vision the end, but the beginning of life. More important to them than vision is obedience to the vision. It ends not in itself, but leads to a life of love and service.[1]

¶ 'A dreamer of dreams,' as he described himself, William Morris was at the same time a man of action, overflowing with practical energy and always eager, not only 'to do and say and see so many things,' but to carry out 'things I have thought of for the bettering of the world as far as lies in me.'

(2) And conversely, the vision is needed to quicken and direct the obedience. There must be action and reaction between our conduct and our ideals. Our practical religion is apt to become aimless and lifeless unless we can keep before us the contemplation of the Divine ideal. The religious life cannot be at its fullest and highest without some recognition of the mystical element in religion. Christians often, no doubt, go through a dogged mechanical course of self-discipline without a ray of illumination from the vision of God. But the vision comes if they persevere. We are not to force ourselves to feel spiritual experiences which do not come naturally to us. We must wait for the quickening impulse of the Spirit. But let us always keep before ourselves the beautiful type of Christian life which the Apostle Paul made his own.

Dear Master, in whose life I see
All that I long and fail to be,
Let Thy clear light for ever shine
To shame and guide this life of mine!
Though what I dream and what I do
In my poor days are always two,
Help me! oppressed by things undone,
Oh, Thou Whose deeds and dreams are one.

Christian Obedience

Acts xxvi. 19.—'I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.'

1. The Apostle has summed up thus the sequel of that great day when Christ met him face to face: 'I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.' For such a Divine manifestation to the human spirit carries its own commanding claim. To us, as to St Paul, it speaks with accents which are not of this world. We cannot come into the presence of Perfect Goodness

[1] D. Butler, *George Fox in Scotland*, 108.

without feeling its moral imperative. The shining ideal of duty, as soon as we perceive it, becomes an instant challenge to our allegiance; and if we reject it, we make the great refusal. Many of our Lord's mightiest parables and precepts hinge upon the act of personal obedience. It is wonderful how wide an area of the inward life is covered by the question, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Henry More, the Cambridge Platonist, wrote: 'It were to be wished the Quinquarticular points were all reduced to this one, namely, "That none shall be saved without sincere obedience."' There is no deeper secret of holiness, no surer way to practise the presence of God.

¶ We are told of Elizabeth Fry that during her last illness she was able to witness this beautiful confession: 'I believe I can truly say that since the age of seventeen I have never waked from sleep, in sickness or in health, by day or night, without my first waking thought being how I might best serve the Lord.'

2. Consider some features of our collective Christian obedience. The Reformers and Puritans bore witness against what they used to call the apostasy of the Roman Church. They declared that mediæval Christendom had been disobedient to its heavenly vision. But the Protestant Church is assailed by similar temptations to disobedience. Preachers become less than faithful, for example, if they emphasize only those aspects of God's revelation which appear to be fashionable and popular. For the testimony which any generation most needs is not the truth which it is most inclined to obey. Thus, for instance, a commercial age will resent or reject our Lord's stern warnings against worldliness and the love of luxury and the pursuit of riches. But we dare not expurgate the gospel: 'That which I received of the Lord, I also delivered unto you.' It is not for us to accept a selection of Christ's commandments, or to carry some chosen splinter of His Cross. The Church has it in charge to declare the full counsel of God.

¶ I wonder whether, if Jesus Christ were in the world to-day, He would approve of this effort of modern times to bridge over the chasm between the Church and the world, and to offer to 'sensible' men of the world, and scientific and literary men, a form of Christianity that they can accept; or whether He would insist upon a separation as complete as in His own day. There is something of a disposition to please everybody all round: working men by the preaching of socialistic doctrines—not so universally popular among them as some preachers seem to think—and educated people by eliminating as far as possible the miraculous element from Christianity. I suppose that within limits it is right, but there are perils. I am inclined to think that to outsiders Christ crucified, faithfully preached, will always be an 'offence,' and that we must not shrink from contempt.[1]

During the War we paid proud and thankful homage to the courage, the good fellowship, the endurance, the cheerfulness and the contempt of danger of our soldiers. Yet these qualities may all belong to a genial pagan who has no conscience of sin, no faith in purity, no thought of the life to come. We dare not disguise the profound defects and inherent limitations of such a character, in spite of its charm. We are false to the ideal of Christian manhood if we pretend that Christ does not also demand in every man reverence and repentance and humility and prayer, that Christ does not bestow forgiveness and peace and a clean heart and the sure hope of heaven. So, again, we joyfully recognize the success of developments like the Brotherhood movement, and the Student Christian movement, and the expansion of the Y.M.C.A. Yet in loyalty to Christ Himself we may not treat these as if they could serve as substitutes for the witness and worship and sacraments of Christ's Church. So again we praise God with exultant hearts because a new vision of Christian reconciliation and reunion has in these latter days dawned upon His scattered and sundered children. Yet we should be faithless to that glorious vision if we consented to purchase ecclesiastical unity at the price of spiritual convictions which have passed into our experience as iron passes into the blood. To obey God can never mean merely to choose the line of least resistance. Our obedience must be, in will if not in deed, obedience unto death, even the death of the Cross.

3. To follow Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth means to live in loyalty to the Divine

[1] John Brash, *Memorials and Correspondence*, 73.

ideal which has dawned on the soul through Him and in Him. If we disobey this revelation we do despite to the Holy Spirit. Yet human nature has a dreadful capacity for turning away from the open vision of God. The Bible speaks solemn words of warning concerning the doom of the disloyal. Gradually they come to forget that they had once been enlightened. The heavenly vision which visited them seems now a mere idle dream. The spiritual city itself, the goal of all the saints, which once shone before them, has dwindled into the least of little stars.

On the other hand, obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge—our instrument for the discovery and verification of spiritual truth. To be delivered from shadows and illusions, to be led into inward certainty, there is no other way but this. The man who is faithful to his present illumination, imperfect though it be, always finds fuller light waiting for him along the road. He shall know the truth, and the truth shall make him free. As he loyally obeys that ideal which he already discerns in part, the eyes of his understanding are opened to a still clearer, ampler, surer vision of things unseen and eternal,

> Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
> But vision—yea, his very hand and foot—
> In moments when he feels he cannot die,
> And knows himself no vision to himself,
> Nor the High God a vision, nor that One
> Who rose again.

The Judgment of Festus

Acts xxvi. 24.—'And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.'

1. This is not a trial: Paul is not here pleading before his judges for an acquittal. It is an entertainment of a royal guest. Festus has succeeded Felix as governor of Judæa. He is the man of real authority and power in Palestine. Herod Agrippa comes to pay his respects to the new governor, and he brings with him his sister Bernice, then a young woman of seventeen or eighteen, in the bloom of her fatal beauty. They would spend some time at Cæsarea, the political capital of Palestine, and would be entertained in the customary fashion when vassal kings came to pay their formal visit of welcome to the representative of Rome. Festus had found on his arrival in Judæa the Apostle Paul in custody. His case had impressed him. This strange East, with its intense interest in religion, its absorption in the unseen, would be an intriguing mystery to the practical Roman. And the personal magnetism of the Apostle, whose dominant soul so mightily moved every one he met, would have its share in that interest. He fancied that King Herod, who was a Jew, might be interested in the religious controversy for which Paul was in custody. And so Festus mentioned the matter to him. He paid him the compliment of seeking his counsel in the matter of preparing the case for the Emperor's judgment. And he suggested that perhaps the king would like to hear the man, to while away a few hours listening to him. Herod graciously agreed; and in the morning, with much pomp, he and his sister, Bernice, came with Festus into one of the state rooms of the palace, and Paul was brought before them. They condescended to listen while the tent-maker of Tarsus told them the story of his soul.

With what haughty derision would Festus have stared had some seer told him that his name would be carried down the stream of the ages, simply because he chanced to come across this man! There were the Herods, looking down from the seats of royalty. Had anyone whispered in their ears that but for this morning's encounter with this obscure fanatic they and all their story would have perished as of no account; that here they came for a little while out of the obscurity which was their true place into the central light of history, and that their names and all the scandal of their lives would be carried down the ages in the story of this obscure man, with what incredulity would they have turned away!

2. It is told of Queen Victoria that a lady-in-waiting once mentioned to her the high opinion a famous statesman had formed of her, and she answered that what mattered was her opinion of him. Inevitably that is the judgment of those in high estate. And certainly in the material world, that lower arena where men strive for wealth and social position and power, the opinions of the highly placed are of importance. But in the real world, the spiritual region where these things are but the machinery

of life, a man's judgment only reveals his wisdom or his folly. There the great man, in whatever position he may be, is the touchstone of the rest. Festus may be the man of power in Palestine; Herod Agrippa may be seated on a throne; Bernice may be the sovereign directress of her small social world; but Paul the prisoner is the man who tests them all, and makes them declare their true place in the human order.

Festus the Governor hears Paul tell the story of his conversion and the new hopes that had risen for the world in the resurrection of Christ Jesus. And what is his judgment upon it all? He thinks Paul a madman, his reason overbalanced by solitary dreaming.

Festus saw easily enough that Paul was no criminal, no plotter against the civil power. The simplicity and honesty of the Apostle were conspicuous. Festus had not been a ruler of men all his days not to see that. And the power of Paul, his subtlety of thought, his soaring religious imagination would be quite evident. Festus had not met many men of so high an order, intellectually or spiritually. And though the Romans, those lords of the practical life, had not a particularly high regard for religious or for speculative intelligence, yet he could readily believe that Paul was one of the abler Rabbis of this strange land given over to unintelligible superstitions. The man he could respect. But the story which he told of the rising from the dead of One who had been crucified, and his sense of its vital importance in the world's history, were too much for him. To Festus, Paul was a visionary, a man passing his days and nights among dreams, filling his whole soul with aery fancies until he had lost the power to distinguish between facts and ideas, realities and dreams.

¶ Any higher allegiance is bound to involve apparent infidelity to lower interests. Perhaps the fullest illumination and sensitiveness to the true proportions of things would, in the vulgar eye, most completely stamp a character with insanity. 'Paul, thou art beside thyself' is the natural expostulation of the mind of limited outlook when confronted with another which, with a wider horizon and a longer perspective to measure by, ignores or traverses the ruled lines on which the smaller life is planned. It is an utterance of instinctive self-defence; if Paul is not mad, then Festus must be—unless, that is, he is prepared to accept the Pauline outlook, and readjust his whole plan of existence to take in that new stretch of spiritual environment of which, till now, he has been unaware. If it is there, he is mad to omit it from his calculations. But to include it suddenly is so very troublesome and disconcerting that, on the whole, it seems preferable to decide against its existence.[1]

¶ He is a great man who sees great things where others see little things, who sees the extraordinary in the ordinary. Ruskin sees a poem in the rose or the lily, while the hod-carrier would perhaps not go a rod out of his way to see a sunset which Ruskin would feed upon for a year.[2]

3. Such a judgment is not to be wondered at, nor is it very blameable in Festus. The gospel of the Resurrection had no meaning to him. Paul's faith rested ultimately on the fact that he was a Jew who saw there the fulfilment of all his nation's hopes. The gospel of Jesus had its roots in all the long Divine education of the chosen people: it was the flower and fruit of all those hopes and ideals which their prophets and saints had made to take root in the national conscience. The Cross of Jesus and His resurrection and His reign in Heaven were to Paul the last word of God in His work for the world's redemption, in which Israel had been a chosen instrument. But Festus was a Gentile, ignorant of all that. The spiritual vocabulary of Paul had no meaning to him. And so it all passed him by. We need eyes to see and ears to hear and a prepared mind to understand. Beauty is nothing to the blind; melody is non-existent to the deaf; a great idea, big with the creating and shaping of a new world, is meaningless to the ignorant. And Festus had not the religious knowledge to give meaning to the story which Paul told. Besides, he was naturally predisposed to religious scepticism. A man is the child of his age and nation. The Romans were hard-headed men of this world, practical men, the world's rulers and conquerors and road-makers, strong in the use of all the eyes can see and the hands handle. They felt instinctively contemptuous of the religious dreamers of the East. To Festus, Paul was one of these, not to be taken too seriously, a curious portent of a strange land.

[1] E. A. Burroughs, *The Valley of Decision*, 47.
[2] O. S. Marden, *Architects of Fate*, 317.

¶ Gibbon, among historians, is typical of that wisdom of this world which is blind to the spiritual facts and forces of life; his story of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, brilliant and majestic in its march of events, stumbles and falters, is darkened and diminished when it confronts the factor of Christianity in the rise and fall of men and nations. Its chapters on this new power in history are a pitiful endeavour to measure the infinite by finite standards; it is as the effort of a blind man to explain colour, of the deaf to appraise music. Sight without insight, view without vision, cannot read aright either the tale of past ages, or the scene of the present hour.[1]

4. We shall not blame Festus for such a judgment. He was a just and honest ruler. And it is a great thing for a man to do his duty simply and honourably in his appointed sphere. There is our place of judgment, and God, the just Judge, never demands from us what is beyond our reach. But we may note the loss which accrues to a man from all that limits the range of his vision or impairs his judgments. It was a loss to Festus that he should be so out of sympathy with all that was humanly precious in Paul's thought. A whole world of hope and thought lay beyond his ken—a world of ideas that was to change the civilization in which he lived, a spiritual order of fresh human values which would have given an infinite expansion and enrichment to his own character. He was and remained a smaller man because of his ignorance and the lack of comprehension which that ignorance entailed.

That is the price men pay for materialism. Many to-day turn aside from religion. They busy themselves with the visible work and the material hopes of their day. They live useful lives: they serve their day and generation in the immediate goods of life: they have the gratification of their little successes. But they lose all the wider thoughts and far-reaching hopes of that spiritual world which is the creative soul of this material world of ours: they pass out of the company of Jesus and Paul and all the saints to dwell in a world of smaller souls, with meaner aims and thinner joys. They are not the makers of the morrow. And the better world of the future, which is being fashioned out of and by the dreams of the saints, will write above their tombs: 'Here lie those who were esteemed great in their day but who were of no real account.'

[1] A. Rudman.

'*Me* a Christian!'

Acts xxvi. 28.—'And Agrippa said unto Paul, With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian' (R.V.).

The judgment of Herod Agrippa on Paul's story is in the words which have become a proverb, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.' But the translation is wrong: it does the King too much honour. He is not on the verge of faith: he is sneering at Paul's personal appeal to him: he means, 'Do you think you can make me a Christian so easily?'

1. Agrippa knew, in a general way, not only a good deal about the prophets and the Jewish religion, but about the outstanding facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul's assumption that he knew would have been very quickly repudiated if it had not been based upon fact. And the inference from his acceptance without contradiction of the Apostle's statement is confirmed by his use of the word 'Christian,' which had by no means come into general use when he spoke, and in itself indicates that he knew a good deal about the people that were so named. But was he any the better for it? No! He was a great deal worse. It took the edge off a good deal of his curiosity. It made him fancy that he knew beforehand all that the Apostle had to say. It stood in the way of his apprehending the truths which he thought that he understood.

Superficial knowledge is the worst enemy of accurate knowledge. For the first condition of knowing a thing is to know that we do not know it. And so there are a great many of us who, having picked up since childhood vague and partially inaccurate notions about Christ and His gospel, are so satisfied on the strength of these that we know all about it that we listen to its preaching with a very languid attention. The ground in our minds is preoccupied with our own vague and imperfect apprehensions. We have never taken a firm hold of the plain central facts of Christianity—our own sinfulness and helplessness, our need

of a Saviour, the perfect work of Jesus Christ who died on the Cross for us and the power of simple faith, if followed by consecration and obedience, to make us partakers of His nature. These are but the fundamentals, the outlines of gospel truth. But we see them, far too many of us, in such a manner as we see the figures cast upon a screen when the lantern is not rightly focussed, a blurred outline. And the blurred outline keeps us from seeing the sharp-cut truth as it is in Jesus. In all regions of thought inaccurate knowledge is the worst foe to further understanding. And eminently is this the case in religion.

2. Agrippa would have set Paul free, but he sneered at his effort to convert him. Not so readily as that would he become a Christian. Why? Because the Christians were of no account in the land: they were such an absurd minority and were mostly of the common people, persons of no weight, followers of One who had been crucified. No sensible self-respecting man who valued his position in society would have anything to do with them. It is the opinion of a worldling, light as the feather which only serves to show how the wind is blowing, valueless as his character.

These Herods made a profession of zeal for Judaism. Herod the Great, the founder of the house, had made it the right thing for them when in Judæa to be careful about the religion of Jehovah. But the right thing in religion is worthless. There is no vitality in it, no strengthening or illuminating power. It never availed to make any of them choose right and eschew evil. Agrippa was no respectable liver. Bernice lived a tainted life: some years later she pawned her honour for the crown of the world, and lost. Those who follow fashion in their religion are peculiarly helpless in the presence of any real spiritual movement. They are in bondage to cant and make-believe, and what can they do but oppose or contemn the new movement until it becomes powerful and supreme. Religion is the one vital force in the world; to have to do with it needs a living mind and an honest heart, and empty worldlings like Agrippa or Bernice, when brought into its august presence, only reveal their hollowness.

¶ The religion of the Forsytes is thus described by Galsworthy: 'Originally, perhaps, members of some primitive sect, they were now, in the natural course of things, members of the Church of England, and caused their wives and children to attend with some regularity the more fashionable churches of the Metropolis. To have doubted their Christianity would have caused them both pain and surprise.'

3. Agrippa listens to Paul; Bernice listens to Paul; Festus listens. And what comes of it? Only this, 'And when they were gone aside they talked between themselves, saying, This man hath done nothing worthy of death or of bonds.' We might translate into a modern equivalent: 'This man preached a very impressive sermon,' and there an end. Agrippa and Bernice went their wicked way, and Festus went his, and none of them knew what a fateful moment they had passed through. These people had been in the light; they were never so near it again.

¶ Christina Rossetti tells us how in one of her country walks, being then entirely ignorant of its rarity, she lighted upon a four-leaved trefoil. She goes on to say: 'Perhaps I plucked and so destroyed it: I certainly left it, for most certainly I have it not. *Now* I would give something to recover that wonder: *then*, when I might have had it for the carrying, I left it. Once missed, one may peer about in vain all the rest of one's days for a second four-leaved trefoil.'

The great opportunity for us all is when we are brought face to face with some movement with the Spirit of God in it, some lovelier mode of life than the common life with its worship of comfort and material success, some cause rising out of the world's great sorrow and weakness with a better hope for men. That is also the Divine touchstone of our quality, the acid that separates the gold from the alloy. When such a thing passes before our eyes, shall we see it and recognize what in it is Divine and serve it? or, swathed in materialism, sunk in the lethargy of custom, shall we view it with indifference? Or, worst state of all, wrapt in the idle superiority of a foolish pride, shall we smile in lordly contempt?

The Passion of the Preacher

Acts xxvi. 29.—'And Paul said, I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds' (R.V.).

1. When Paul made his defence before him King Agrippa tried to ward off the Apostle's earnestness with a flippant word. 'Do you suppose that in so short a time, and with arguments so flimsy, you will coax me into becoming *a Christian*, the votary of a sect which is everywhere spoken against, the adherent and advocate of a puerile heresy?' The impassioned preacher has frightened Agrippa, and he shelters himself behind a sneer, and hastens to escape from one who looks as if he would take no denial.

However it was as to Agrippa—whether he deemed it too absurd to hear more, or whether the message had struck home—the rejoinder brings out the essential nobility of the prisoner. There are few sentences grander in the whole compass of literature. 'I would to God, that whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds.' 'Such as I am'—this poor, worn-looking Jew, confronting the Tetrarch with all the pomp and pride and circumstance of his state, and protesting that his most earnest desire was that the Tetrarch, and indeed every person present, were such as himself, minus his bonds. There is a picture, a very fascinating picture, in the first Book of Holy Scripture—the picture of the old Hebrew sheik, the head of the nomad tribe, brought into the presence of the Pharaoh of Egypt, and that old man lifting up his hand and pronouncing his benediction over that potentate; but interesting and fascinating as that old-world picture is, this of the tent-maker in the Court of Cæsarea is more fascinating and more interesting still—this preacher of strange doctrines protesting before the royalty of the world that the true royalty was with himself, and that he was willing to give his own life, to give away all that he had, in order that he might impart this kingdom and this royalty to others.

Agrippa was not capable of appreciating the argument that had been used. A man who had resigned himself to the rude, licentious life to which Agrippa had resigned himself was not capable of comprehending. He had lost the faculty; but if he cannot comprehend the argument, he can comprehend the earnestness that is in that man. We may not be able to appreciate the whole of an argument or to understand the points of a pleading, but we can always feel the earnestness of an earnest man; and the Tetrarch knew about the passion that was in that man's soul—the passion to make men Christians. Every other ambition of his life had passed into this. All the waters of his soul had gathered themselves into one mighty flood to be poured through the narrows of this single purpose: 'To preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.' The urgency of his message was like a Divine constraint which gave him no rest.

¶ Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, referring to Wesley's *Journal*, says: 'There is hardly any book like it; its shrewdness, its wit, its wisdom, its knowledge are bordered with a pale edge of fire—the spiritual passion of the great apostle's soul.'

Brothers and sisters, careworn, pale,
Before your time,
O wanderers, weary, footsore, frail,
From every clime,

Come, take my hands: could you but know
My longing heart,
Oppress with tears that wait to flow,
Pride would not part

Our souls, nor subtle doubt which bars
The love that seeks,
And here, beneath the patient stars,
Feels, yearns, and speaks:—

I do not judge, I claim no height
Of wise or good
To pity, only the human right
Of brotherhood,

The right to claim my kindred, know
The worst and best,
And fold the shapes that come and go
Against my breast.[1]

2. Is not this passion to win men the very heart of preaching? To the prophets preaching was a sore battle with the hard hearts of their

[1] J. W. Taylor, *The Doorkeeper*, 58.

contemporaries, in which the messenger of the Lord worked with the pity of his weakness upon him, at a supreme cost to himself and conscious that he must summon to his desperate task every resource.

Behind all the prophet's preaching there must needs be his own experience. It is for his own soul that he must first find interpretations. He must drink deep draughts of life, living intensely and strenuously. Some prophets have written the message that they sent forth in their own hearts' blood, and no message has ever been or will ever be very convincing that has not a dash of the prophet's blood upon it. Behind every man's preaching there lies his wilderness, where he has fought alone with devils and been aware of the presence both of wild beasts and of angels. There he must have wrestled with doubt until his thinking grew clear and articulate; he must have fought for character against temptation. So when he comes forth to men, he must ever seem to meet them as one who is fighting their battle on ground where he has won his own.[1]

¶ The first essential for our work, the one thing we must have, is a passion for Jesus Christ. And that is where some of us know that we are failing. We are too cool, too unconcerned, have not a sufficient sense of the bigness of the thing we have to offer! How can we press Him upon others unless our own soul is exulting in Him: how can we hope that they will learn of us unless they feel that we ourselves know our Lord intimately, and have the right to speak of Him, that we ourselves have proved that these wonderful promises of what He does and is, are true, and that we hand them on with confidence as what we know? As old Bishop Wilson—whom Arnold preferred grotesquely to à Kempis—has it, 'to be heartily in love with the truth one commends is the great secret of becoming a good preacher.'[2]

The Apostle had this preparation, this passion, this personality. And he had the other essential thing—a great message to deliver. He became 'all things' to all men that he might 'save some.' But in all the elasticity of his relations he never changed his themes. He moved amid the garishness of Ephesus, and Corinth, and Rome, but he never borrowed the artificial splendour of his surroundings and thereby eclipsed the Cross. No 'way of the world' seduced him from his central themes. Wherever he went, whether to a little prayer-meeting by the river-side in Philippi or amid the aggressive, sensational glare of Cæsarea, Ephesus, or Corinth, he 'determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified.' And amid all the changed conditions of our day—the social upheavals, the race for wealth, the quest of pleasure—we shall gain nothing by hugging the subordinate, or by paying any homage to the flippancy and frivolity of the time.

3. St Paul made a very special appeal to the King—'King Agrippa, believest thou?' Generalities effect little. If we study the Lord Christ we shall find how *special* He was; how sometimes to get even one individual He would go a long, long way. We read of Him on one occasion travelling until He is weary, going through Samaria when He might have avoided that road. He says to one and to another, 'Follow me.' Are we persistent enough? We knock at the doors of human hearts, and then we run away; but the great thing is to keep knocking, realizing the value of the individual soul.

That day was St Paul's opportunity with the King, and we know with what ardour he embraced it. It was also the King's opportunity. We do not know what passed through his mind, but he resisted the truth. It is often hard work getting the response for which God looks in a human soul. There is a glimpse of the risen Saviour in the Book of Revelation that is a very beautiful and touching one, in which He says, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock.' And often He stands long before there is any answer. It had not been so easy getting Saul himself, and the very knowledge of that would make him sympathetic. He knew that resistance. There is one thing that often keeps men from surrender, and that is, a great power of indolence—heart indolence; the unwillingness just to realize the call of God, and all that that means. 'I was asleep,' it is written in the old Song concerning the one whom the Divine Lover was seeking—'I was asleep, but my heart awaked'; and it is that heart-sleep that makes so many deaf to the call and the knock of the Lord. With others there is a sin that craves to be indulged—at least, to

[1] J. Kelman, *War and Preaching*, 257.
[2] A. J. Gossip, *In Christ's Stead*, 23.

be tolerated. And there are many who are interpreted in the old prayer of St Augustine, who tells us that he used to pray that he might be converted, but added, 'Not yet.'

¶ Pope Pius, on Christmas Eve, 1925, stood before the Holy Gate in St Peter's and knocked three times with a silver hammer, saying, 'Open to me the gates of justice,' and the door that had been sealed for twenty-five years opened and a mighty throng with songs upon their lips passed into the temple, and Christmas Eve ushered in the holy year of the Roman Catholic Church.[1]

'I would that ye were altogether such as I am,' says Paul. His was a whole-hearted surrender to Christ, and the one prayer that ran through his life was, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Are we on fire with the desire to gain others for Christianity and Christ!—it is the last thing which our neighbours are likely to say to us, and the last thing which our custom-bound and comfort-loving hearts wish to be true of ourselves. We know that Christ is what this life requires, and that only when it falls into His kind arms will it be safe and well. And we know that the time is shortened, and the night impends. Necessity should be laid on us. Love should force us out from the warm hearth and the overflowing feast to where our kinsfolk pine and die. In our conversation, by our character, through our intercessions, we ought to be persuading our brethren to become such as we are.

¶ That is an exquisite page of *Eothen* in which Kinglake describes his approach to Egypt. For eight days he had been in the Desert, the flaming sky above him, the sand below him glaring with light and fire. But on the eighth day a dark line appeared on the forward horizon, and soon the line deepened into a fringe sparkling as if sown with diamonds. Before him at length were the gardens and minarets of Egypt, and the mighty works of the Nile. That evening, for the last time, his tent was still pitched in the Desert. But one of his Arabs stalked away rapidly towards the west, without telling him of his errand. After a while he returned. He had toiled on a graceful service. He had travelled all the way on to the border of the living world, and he brought his master back for a token an ear of rice, full, fresh, and green. 'An ear of rice, full, fresh, and green'—why are we not taking it from our living world to the dwellers in the Desert? [1]

[1] H. T. Kerr, *The Gospel in Modern Poetry*, 23.

The Expert and the Man of God

Acts xxvii. 11.—'Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.'

When the vessel in which the Apostle sailed reached the Fair Havens in Crete, the question arose as to whether a stay should be made in the shelter afforded by that harbour, or whether the voyage should at once be resumed. St Paul counselled delay, but the captain decided to sail, and the vessel put out to sea. The centurion in whose charge St Paul had been placed agreed with this view; he believed the word of the captain rather than the word of the Apostle. This is not surprising; for in navigation the captain was an expert, whereas St Paul—a man of God, indeed—was only a prisoner, a passenger, a preacher. The majority of people would have paid little attention to his opinion on the point in question. Nevertheless, as events proved, St Paul was right and the captain was wrong. A storm sprang up, and the vessel became a total wreck, though all on board escaped safe to land.

The story suggests the truth that in the consideration of many problems which seem to be only for experts, there is room for the point of view represented by the man of God.

1. To every man who is in touch with God, and who seeks to bear witness to the reality of things unseen, the experience of the Apostle is heartening, but especially to those who, afar off, follow him in the work of Christian preaching. For the preacher who, however imperfectly, stands before men as the mouthpiece of the Divine, has often of late been rendered timorous and hesitative, even if he has not been cowed into silence, by the voice of the expert. There are preachers, for example, living to-day who began their ministry in the atmosphere created by *the scientific materialism* of the last generation. That view of life rejected the spiritual interpretation of the universe on which all religion is based. Supported as it was by some of the most illustrious

[1] A. Smellie.

names in science, it made rapid headway to the grievous discomfiture of many devout souls. On such a view of the world the content of all true preaching vanished; the platform on which the preacher stood collapsed. Nor was the position eased when men took refuge in Agnosticism, and declared that even if there were a God He could not be known, much less could men enter into communion with Him. The judgment of these experts was regarded as final, and they were held in profound reverence. But now? Materialism as a theory has largely passed away. From science we have accepted its assured results, even where this acceptance has compelled a modification of our traditional religious belief. But we still see that our knowledge is greater than our science, and we hold that, though science has a right in the world, it has no right to the world. There was, then, no need for the man of God to be silent. So far as the essence of his message is concerned, his point of view stands. It is the point of view of some of the experts which has disappeared.

2. The interpretation of life and the world which finds no place for God involved a radical change in man's outlook on every phase of human experience, and in *the sphere of social reform* it required of us that we should believe that man was entirely fashioned by heredity and circumstances, and that the only way out was to improve his circumstances, and thus to annul, or at least to modify, the hereditary influences which played upon his life. Education, a better environment, the concentration of every endeavour on this life—these were some of the means by which the lot of humanity was to be improved. The preacher felt the temperature suddenly go down, and sometimes his words were frozen on his lips. When he appealed to men's wills, he was told that men's wills were not free to respond. When he spoke of spiritual realities, he was told that material comfort was the goal. When he dealt with the sinfulness of sin, he was told that the higher man was not thinking about his sin. The experts were against him. But a great change has taken place. There is among Labour leaders and social workers a growing recognition of the fact that man is greater than his circumstances, and that 'the soul of all improvement is the improvement of the soul.' In the coming days, it may be hoped, the progress of social endeavour will not be stayed, but the point of view represented more especially by the man of God will be more and more taken into account.

¶ Christ, living in an age like ours, declared with emphasis that it is we ourselves who are the cause of the worst difficulties for ourselves and others, we ourselves who must be changed if there is ever to be a new world; and if we fail to put the stress there, we are preaching some new gospel, and not Christ's. For Him it would have been so easy to have won flocks of adherents had He preached what they desired, what seemed to them the things of first importance. But He would not. And we too must not, for the sake of winning popularity for Christ, allow ourselves to forget to cry, as He cried, that no economic change will solve the problem, and no revolution cleanse the world; that, as Herbert Spencer put it, 'no alchemy can produce golden conduct out of leaden motives'; that man does not live by bread alone, and that all hopes, however splendid in their daring, and however chivalrously championed, that do not end in personal holiness and the unselfishness of Christ in us, will fade in disillusionment and heartbreak, and the old old problem be left still unsolved. As Francis Thompson has it:

> There is no expeditious road
> To pack and label men for God,
> And save them by the barrel load.[1]

Renan once said that part of the duty of the twentieth century would be to pick out of the wastepaper basket a number of ideas which had been thrown into it by the nineteenth century. The process is going on, and though it may now seem a bold thing to say, the influence of the war has counted for a great deal in this direction. Every one received a shock in the war, but most of all the people who had tried to persuade us that evil was a figment of the theological imagination, and that God might be left out of account. The origin of the war and the course of the war disproved both these assertions. The experts differed widely, and were often wrong. It is agreed on all hands that the decisive battle of the war was the conflict on the Marne, and in his volume on that titanic struggle, Mr Hilaire

[1] A. J. Gossip, *From the Edge of the Crowd*, 95.

Belloc, writing as a military expert, confessed that he was baffled by the result, and the only conclusion he could reach was that both armies were in the hands of a Higher Will, which finally decided the issue.

Let the man of God, therefore, and especially the Christian preacher, hold on his way. In the words of Carlyle, 'There is need of him yet.' The late Principal Forsyth not long before he died counselled the Christian Church to stand fast until the world came round to its point of view. Slowly, but we believe surely, the world is coming round. On the surface there has been during the last few years a failure of moral idealism. But beneath the surface there is an ever-deepening conviction that the godless view of life is played out. If only the Christian preacher will disentangle his message from the valueless accretions which have grown up around it in the course of the centuries; if only he will pierce to the heart of the gospel—God's love revealed in Christ, the way of life seen in Christ, the power for holy living given in Christ—if only he will preach this simple but glorious message, and with passionate earnestness demand the practical application of it to social, national, and international affairs, he will even yet win the day and usher in the Kingdom of God.[1]

The South Wind

Acts xxvii. 13.—'And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.'

On board the ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy there was a serious conflict of opinion. The lateness of the season, and the state of the weather, made it almost certain to the officers that they must winter in Crete. With much difficulty they had reached Fair Havens, a lonely and inconvenient harbour. A few hours' sailing, with a favourable wind, would bring them to the much more desirable shelter of Phenice. Already navigation was dangerous; and yet might they not venture forth in the hope of reaching this pleasanter and safer harbour? Julius, the Roman centurion, in charge of a band of prisoners bound for the imperial city, called a council. The decision was to try and attain the better anchorage. Paul advised that they should stay where they were. Although a prisoner, he had already given promise of that remarkable ascendency over men which was one of his distinguishing qualities. Nor was he ignorant of the sea. He had made sail-cloth in his day, and like so many missionaries since his time he could turn his hand to almost anything, being an expert in most of them. He had also experience. He could say, 'Thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep.'

Although the greater part advised to depart thence, they might have remained there, laid up all the winter in the incommodious harbour, had not the wind, which hitherto had blown steadily from the north-west, suddenly veered about. 'The south wind blew softly.' A smile of satisfaction came on the faces of owner and captain, the anchor was weighed, the great mainsail was hoisted, and the crew put out to sea in the expectation of only a few hours' run to the hospitable harbour of their hopes. Scarcely two weeks after this Paul stood on the deck of that same vessel, now driving before the fury of the tempest—two weeks beneath a sunless and starless sky, in a ship from which cargo and tackling has been flung into the sea. And all this harm and loss because when the south wind blew softly they, 'supposing that they had obtained their purpose, weighed anchor.'

1. The New Testament writers mention many victims of mistaken suppositions. There were, for example, the men in our Lord's parable, who had not only failed to study the conditions of the labour market, but had miscalculated the whole basis of existence, with the consequence that, in the end of the day, they were grievously disappointed with the scheme of things. 'They supposed that they would receive more.' Joseph and Mary also were content for a time to proceed upon an easy-going supposition, with the result that they lost the presence of Jesus for a time. 'Supposing him to have been in the company' they went unconcernedly on and it took them three days of sorrowful and anxious seeking to find Him again. No single member of any Christian community can take it for granted that Jesus is in the company. He may have left it through the carelessness and indifference of those who did not realize that

[1] J. Colville, *The Christian Optimist*, 145.

His vital presence might be lost long before it was even missed.

There are the mistaken suppositions of the friends of the Christian religion, of those who take the central Figure either for something too impalpable, as when the disciples twice over supposed that they beheld a spirit; or of those who make the opposite mistake of taking Him for something less than He is, as when, with Mary, they suppose Him to be only a working man. And there are the equally wrong suppositions of the enemies of the Christian religion, of those who mistake the spirit and method of its followers. 'These are not intoxicated, as ye suppose,' was the first word of Christian apologetic. And if that was but the passing jest of the vulgar mob, there was a bitterness ever watchful and ready to misconstrue each action of the Christian disciple. The very presence of Trophimus the Ephesian in the city of Jerusalem, gave rise to the ready supposition that Paul had taken him into the unlawful precincts of the Temple. 'They stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.' But he wasn't! They made the biggest mistake of their lives, not only in stoning the Apostle, but still more in supposing that they had put an end to him and the gospel he preached. And the stoning still goes on, and men fling religion out of their lives, and do their best to drag it out of the city and the state; but they know not the resurrection power in the Church of Christ who suppose that she is dead.

But there is one supposition of which we are all apt to become the victims. It is what we might call the ever-present *snare of the South Wind*. The mariners of the ship in which St Paul sailed for Italy, 'when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, weighed anchor.' It was, perhaps, a natural enough supposition, the kind of probability upon which we all must act every day if we are to get anything done at all. The centurion, the master, and the owner of the ship—the army, the government, and the people, do they ever take the Church quite seriously, although they seem to show it some respect and consideration, as Julius did to Paul? But the Apostle did not let himself be discouraged by the seeming indifference to his message and advice. After all, he had delivered his soul, and done his duty when he had given due warning of the result of a certain line of conduct. And when, later on, those on board suffered the consequences of their neglect of the apostolic warning, Paul was the first to help them in the catastrophe brought about through their wilfulness. Let us not be unduly discouraged if the Church seems to be addressing deaf ears and self-confident minds. The man of prayer and sanctified common sense will continue to give the community his sympathetic counsel; and so far from being embittered by the apparent failure of his endeavours, he will be the foremost to help and cheer with spiritual comfort and practical assistance when the storm which he foresaw breaks upon the vessel.

'Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the lading and the ship, but also of our lives.' It is not the voice of old-fashioned religion, so much as that of foreseeing common sense. Paul was no kill-joy. He was as anxious to get to Rome as any of them, and had purer and loftier motives for his anxiety. But Rome could not be reached in a day. It is sometimes urged against the Church of Christ that she cares only for the souls of those on board without showing anxiety for their general well-being. That was not the case with Paul. 'The lading and the ship' were quite as much in the thought and on the heart of the Apostle as the immortal souls, although naturally and properly these were his main care. Organize; look ahead; take no foolish risks in the elation of the moment; do not hastily break away from safe moorings and sheltered roadsteads. That is the apostolic admonition as we ride for the moment in the welcome relief of Fair Havens. Can Paul and Julius and the master and the owner not all come close together for counsel and encouragement? They are all needed, and must work together for the safe sailing of the ship—the sense of responsible ownership, the experience of the government, the devotion of Julius, and the prayers of Paul.

2. But to those who gather as Christian men and women in the House of God the admonition of the Apostle comes home with peculiar and even more intimate and commanding force. To the older among us the words of the Apostle come as a reminder that we cannot run upon accumulated experience and inherited piety. God has

done great things for us whereof we are glad. If we have not yet reached Rome, we are not without the comfort and rest of Fair Havens. But Christian found that the peace of the House Beautiful was but a preparation for the fight with Apollyon; and from Fair Havens Paul sailed into the teeth of Euroclydon. Let us not suppose that we have obtained our purpose yet. The snare of the south wind is never more soft and subtle in its scented and bewitching blowing than when it tempts an old Christian to loose the tackling of the soul. You remember Dante's picture of the ship that has sailed safely all her voyage through, 'wrecked in the harbour's mouth.'

¶ God's north wind has been the saviour of many a soul. They have but wrapped the tighter about them the garment of salvation. When the north wind blew roughly they ran for shelter to a safety they had not sought before, and obtained something better than their original purpose. 'You must take the wind in your face,' says Samuel Rutherford, that old salt of the soul, 'if you would fetch Christ.'

Nor must the younger of us suppose that we have obtained our purpose when we have joined the Church or made our resolves. It is a great thing to have our sailing orders and know where we are bound for, but we have yet to make the voyage. There is really no more dangerous and insidious time than when the south wind blows softly, when all men speak well of us, and life is an affair of blue seas and clear skies. It is just then that we are lulled into a fatal carelessness. The goodness of God should indeed lead us all to repentance and new obedience. But over and over again it has been sadly true that the God who was sought and found in the stress of anxiety has been lost in the security and ease of peace.

¶ There is a story told of a young Western farmer who used to frequent the village bar-room and hitch his team by the saloon. After his conversion he never visited the bar-room, but he continued to hitch his team in the same place. The trained and watchful eye of a good old deacon noticed this, and after congratulating the youth upon his conversion, he said: 'George, I am a good deal older than you and will be pardoned, I know, if I make a suggestion out of my wider Christian experience. No matter how strong you think you are, take my advice and at once change your hitching-post.'

3. Notice the reason that the mariners gave for disregarding the advice of St Paul and taking such fearful risks. 'Because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to put to sea from thence.' That is always the excuse that people give for breaking away from old and safe moorings. The place is too strait for them. They long for the open freedom of the sea, and to be getting on. The outlook is too restricted. The religion of their fathers is too narrow. Let us risk it; let us get out; we can always run into some safe harbour if a storm does get up. The folly of it! Paul could take risks as well and as fearlessly as any man, but he knew that you might as well try to tame a tiger by stroking it as play with the unbound fury of Euroclydon. Better to winter in the narrow ways of Fair Havens than to run helpless before the gale with neither sun nor stars in many days appearing, and certain shipwreck ahead.

And sometimes people of more thoughtful temperament urge us to leave old moorings and make for the uncharted sea, because, they say, the shelter of revealed religion is not commodious for the soul of man to winter in. There is, they tell us, no room in the old harbour of Fair Havens for the larger craft of mind and intellect that we build do-day. 'Not commodious to winter in!' *Faith never is.* You will never find any creed, any presentation, any 'last word' that is adequate. Fair Havens at the best is a half-way house, a makeshift on the way to the Eternal City. Faith at the best is a precarious harbour, open to the inrush of many contrary winds and the wash of heavy seas. But then that is just the nature of faith. Faith is an anchor, not a dry-dock. The Apostle Paul and all the saints have been well aware that it was not commodious. But we must winter somewhere. Why not with Paul, in the promises of God and the love of Christ? The commodiousness is in the Father's house, when at last we arrive

> where no storms come,
> Where the green swell is in the haven dumb,
> And out of the swing of the sea.

Euroclydon

Acts xxvii. 14.—'A tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.'

St Luke tells us how, after a deceitful spell of calm weather which tempted them from their moorings in Crete, there broke over them a tempestuous wind which, in the New Testament, is called Euroclydon. It was some sort of north-easter, as the name suggests. But it is sometimes used in a wider sense—just a giant wind that grips the sea and forces the sea to grip the ship, one fierce hand above tearing at the sails and straining the mast, and another huge hand below bending the timbers till they groan and start and cry out like live things that are hurt. This is how Anatolius, an early Greek hymn writer, uses it to describe the storm which Jesus stilled on the Sea of Galilee, though the winds that sweep down the valleys there do not come from the north or north-east. And so, in our modern hymn, we have—

> Ridge of the mountain-wave,
> Lower thy crest!
> Wail of Euroclydon,
> Be thou at rest!

We find three big storms described in the Bible. The first is the storm that overtook Jonah on his way to Tarshish; the second is the storm on the Sea of Galilee; the third is St Paul's Euroclydon. Between the first two of these we observe a curious parallel: each of them tells of a sleeper who slumbers through the tempest, and has to be wakened on the ground that it is irrational to lie asleep while the ship is on her beam ends. When, however, we compare these two incidents, we are arrested by a striking difference. The Phœnician sailors wake their sleeping passenger and tell him to arise and call upon his God. The disciples who rouse their sleeping Master say, 'Master, carest thou not that we perish?' From which even a casual reader may infer that, as Jesus Himself said in another connection, 'a greater than Jonah is here.' The storm on the Sea of Galilee was making theology—as we gather from the gospel itself: 'What manner of man is this? . . . the winds and the sea obey him.'

The Sea of Galilee was one of the experimental connecting-links between Christ and His disciples. It helped to make them what they were to one another. We do not realize all at once the important part which that wind-swept inland lake may have had in the evolution of the gospel. How many things the sea might tell us, if, instead of its waves lifting up their conventional tumult, they could talk to us as publishers of faith and promisers of peace. Jesus found His most loyal companions at the pier-head and on the quay. They were children of the storm, sons of the tempest, if we may imitate the 'Boanerges' title. And Jesus their Master had embarked on the tossing waves with them; more than once He had disputed with the weather their ownership and security. We are studying a group of weather-beaten men, and an equally weather-beaten Pilot. No fair-weather Christ to-day, and no fair-weather disciples.

Now, consider the question, what was the name of the ship in which they were sailing? Because ships have names, and cannot sail without them. This particular ship is a type and symbol of the coming Church, and ought to have a name that will suggest the fact. But as the Church was not yet come, we cannot call it *Ecclesia*. It must have some simple universal name. Perhaps we might call it *Espirito Santo*—for surely that was the name descriptive of the Church when it was first launched. The disciples, who compose its crew, embarked under this title—to go wherever the Holy Spirit went. They 'sign on' under articles of allegiance to the Holy Ghost, with an understanding that they will be neither mutinous, nor disaffected, nor find fault with their rations, nor give way to any of the varied forms in which discontent disguises itself for Christ's men.

1. *Christ's Ownership.*—These mariners are all agreed that they do not own the ship; but on the contrary the ship owns them. If a formula should be necessary to express this fact, the New Testament supplies a number of simple statements not to be controverted, which will shoot the truth into each disciple's inmost heart. They will remind one another that 'we are not our own, we are bought with a price.' Sometimes the Captain will remind them of the very same thing. 'You did not choose me,' He says, 'but I have chosen you.' His ownership eclipses theirs—even if sometimes

the sense of their ownership of Him rises up in the language either of loyalty or of love. At all events, Jesus spoke in this wise to His disciples during the great hours which preceded His Passion—hours wherein so much was communicated that they seemed more like days than hours, and more like years than days. The closer He pressed them to His heart, the further He seemed to withdraw from their side; and while He was making them most sensible of being His friends, He was also telling them that they did well in calling Him 'Lord' and naming Him 'Master.' When they signed on to sail with Him, they learnt the meaning of the assertion, 'Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' Every one of them accepted this interpretation of his engagement and confessed:

My bark is wafted to the strand
By breath Divine,
And on the helm I feel a Hand
Other than mine.

2. *Christ's Guidance.*—It was understood also that the crew were not expected to take charge of the steering—not even in fair weather, much less in rough. As believers, we are under Divine direction. And as we may not choose the course or touch the tiller, so neither are we to interfere with the compass. Any ship might be wrecked, if, for instance, a lump of soft iron were smuggled into the box where its compass is kept. Now our self-will exerts just such a distorting influence; it can alter the ship's course. We were heading direct for heaven; but now wilfulness and pride deflect the compass, and we find ourselves among rocks and shoals and quicksands. The wise apostle knew what he was writing about when he warned himself, 'Lest I should become a castaway.'

¶ Madame Guyon, the author of *A Short and Easy Method of Prayer*, died in 1717, at the age of sixty-nine. Her long life was one of complete self-surrender and trust in God. In one of her poems she wrote—

Yield to the Lord with simple heart
All that thou hast, and all thou art;
Renounce all strength but strength Divine,
And peace shall be for ever thine;
Behold the path which I have trod—
My path till I go home to God.

3. *Trials on the Way.*—Next consider that these gallant souls who sail with Jesus Christ are relieved from the responsibility of selecting their weather, and they have no right to complain about it when it comes. If they are genuine mystics, they learn how to take sunshine and storm alike 'with a frolic welcome.' Their canticles include an anthem to the north wind and a song to the south wind—to-day, the south wind glowing softly, with the sense of fulfilled desire; to-morrow, the tempest called Euroclydon, and they are tossed to and fro and are at their wits' end. Yet the Lord can quell the tempest, because He made it. He knew the storm was coming; He had created the funnels among the hills through which it should blow. Our Lord did not suggest to the disciples that there was going to be dirty weather, and that therefore they should stay on shore. Either He pushed them off with the remark that He Himself was coming presently, or else He was the first to go on board. And when the storm found Him asleep these disciples began to shake Him and wake Him. Which of them was foremost? We may guess that perhaps Thomas was as prompt as any. However, Thomas always ends believing, whatever he begins with. It could not be John who waked up Jesus. There is a little touch in the Gospels which tells us that, when the storm was at its worst, they were now halfway over the lake; and in the Fourth Gospel this is particularized as being twenty-five or thirty *stadia* on the passage across. This disciple said to himself, 'We are more than halfway'; and to feel that you are more than half-way is the language of faith and hope.

¶ 'When you take your first voyage across the Atlantic, the object of vital interest on board is the chart of the voyage, of which you get a copy. One of these charts hangs framed at the top of the companion-way, and day by day a little red line creeps across the chart to indicate how much of the voyage is really done. Every day of our life shows a shortened line to heaven and a lengthening line from earth. On shipboard you wake up and ask, 'Where are we now, steward?' And the answer comes, '200 miles to the westward, sir.' We had sailed that distance in the dark while we slept.

This lengthening red line on the chart leads us on to speak in our Lord's own language about the 'little while.' The 'little while' and the 'little way' perplexed His disciples when they first heard Him using such words,

for it was a new strange language. Note that it is John the beloved who has preserved for us the doctrine of the 'little while.' Yet, if Church tradition has any validity, John was to have the longest waiting time of any of the company who listened when the Lord propounded the perplexing doctrine about seeing Him again after a brief interval. Especially for lovers it is hard to get their time-measurements correct; to them every little absence appears a long absence, and if you questioned them they would say, there is no such thing as a 'little while' except the time we spend together. To the Blessed Damosel, lonely in heaven, ten years seemed 'ten years of years.'

Finally, the red line on the chart ends in the City. We venture to represent in English a play on words which occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come—the coming city.' 'No lasting city, but the city at last.' It lies just across on the other side of the chart at present, and those who make the voyage are saluting the City from afar, just as they saluted the promises of reaching it.[1]

Fierce was the wild billow,
  Dark was the night,
Oars laboured heavily,
  Foam glimmered white;
Trembled the mariners—
  Peril was nigh:
Then said the God of God,
  'Peace, it is I!'

Ridge of the mountain-wave,
  Lower thy crest!
Wail of Euroclydon,
  Be thou at rest!
Sorrow can never be,
  Darkness must fly,
Where saith the light of light,
  'Peace, it is I!'

Jesu, Deliverer,
  Come thou to me;
Soothe thou my voyaging
  Over life's sea:
Thou, when the storm of death
  Roars, sweeping by,
Whisper, O truth of truth,
  'Peace, it is I!'[2]

[1] J. Rendel Harris, *As Pants the Hart*, 36. [2] Anatolius.

The Ministry of Cheer

Acts xxvii. 22.—'I exhort you to be of good cheer.'

This was a characteristic and constant ministry of St Paul. He was an apostle of encouragement, ever feeding smouldering fires, restoring flickering lamps, bringing back a cheery light of hope to the bleak and desolate soul. He was an optimist who borrowed his light and flame from the Temple and Altar of the most High God. The steady heartening word he spoke at this crisis of the tempest was a familiar sound upon his lips, for wherever he found men despondent, discouraged, losing heart in the long wait or the long fight, this was his inspiriting appeal, 'I exhort you to be of good cheer.'

The ministry of encouragement is always needed, and never more so than it is to-day. Life is very swift and very intense, and they who run hard are often faint, and they who cannot run hard are often in despair. Things were never so keen, and therefore there was never more care and depression. On every side people are 'run down,' and physical collapse is frequently attended by moral and spiritual disaster. But apart altogether from the hot and feverish circumstances of our day, there are the depressions incident to common human life. There is the despondency due to temperament. There is the discouragement created by fierce and gusty circumstances. Never was there a time when there was greater need than now of the herald of cheerfulness, the messenger whose tone is heartening, and whose spirit conveys the energies of the Holy Ghost. For one man who is harmed by timely praise there are fifty who are helped by it. Remembering how every man we meet walks like the risen Lord within the veil, and remembering how sometimes heaviest crosses are borne by those whose faces are the brightest, we believe that the need of men to be encouraged is even more widespread then we know.

1. Let us think of some of the people who need the ministry of cheer.

(1) *Those who have no confidence in themselves.*—These are reticent, reserved, shy, self-depreciatory. They always esteem themselves as nobodies. They regard themselves as incapable of making any contribution to the common good. These are the souls who never worthily

measure themselves against imposing tasks. Or they may have tried and become tremulous in the presence of difficulty, and are seeking what they think to be the easiest parts of the field. We find them saying, 'No, I cannot do it; I am not fit for it.' And they feel it, and they mean it; and they remain in their seclusion with no just knowledge of their strength. Now what is needed is some gracious ministry of encouragement. They must be discovered to themselves. It is amazing what one man's confidence can do in raising a brother from depression. We may bring our vision to his lack of vision, and our sight will create the requisite movement. Marvellous energy is born of human fellowship. We must use the strong Christian cheer that brings shy souls from 'under the fig-tree,' and gives them confidence to seize the duties which they are quite competent to discharge.

¶ Another gift, amounting to genius, was Jowett's prescience in selecting the right man or woman for any particular job. Once the selection was made and the appointment confirmed, he trusted his lieutenants and co-adjutors—trusted them sometimes until, beginning diffidently, they trusted themselves. 'I do not think,' he wrote to a man who shrank, from sheer modesty, from an important office for which Jowett had designated him, 'that in these matters a man's own diffidence and distrust of himself are the qualities that ought to determine a man's judgment. I rather agree with ——'s half-jocular remark that the sense of unfitness is probably the richest qualification for such service.' [1]

(2) *Those who win none of the prizes of life.*—No visible distinctions are theirs. They are the people who live and act at the back of the stage. They fill the small parts of the play. They walk in and walk out again. They form the background for more imposing actors. They are the organ-blowers out of sight. They are the permanent officials who gather all the materials for the Cabinet Minister's brilliant speech. They constitute that great company who work outside the sphere of the limelight. They are the folk who toil on where the trumpet never sounds. They are the workers on whom we all depend, but whose honest services are rarely sung. They contribute the invisible fidelities on which the solidity of human society so eminently depends. And these folk are often dispirited. They are despondent concerning the office they fill in the vast organism of common life. What is wanted is a ministry of cheer. We must bring to them the Lord's teaching about the infinite ministry of small fidelities. We must tell them that in the Master's estimate offices are measured not by their prominence, but by the fidelity with which they are filled—that true worth is found in the realm of endeavour and not of achievement. We must tell them that the real triumph in life is to be measured by the contribution which our work has made to our character, and that nothing noble is overlooked by our King. 'I know thy works. My Father who seeth in secret Himself shall recompense thee.'

(3) *Those who are growing old.*—They measure the possibility of service by the possession of physical robustness. They begin to think themselves encumbrances in the way. 'Their working days are over.' They 'cannot do much now.' They confound retirement with uselessness, and the waiting moments with an idle life. And so they are often in need of the ministry of Christian cheer. It is a shame when we allow a veteran to think himself useless. We must tell our ageing folk that they can still bring forth fruit. Spiritual service is not to be measured by physical strength. We must emphasise the superlative worth of a fine and noble spirit. Our churches are endowed with the sacred help of old men and women whose physical freshness has gone, but whose intercessory interest and services are gloriously abundant. We must cheer these, and tell them that, like the autumn leaves, they can be more resplendently beautiful in the days of their decline.

(4) *Workers in the sphere of Christian life and service.*—To these a timely word of kindly cheer is as a well of water in a thirsty land. How often young Christians say, 'There are times when I feel like giving it all up.' How often Christian workers tell us they are making no progress, are achieving nothing, are labouring in vain and spending their strength for naught, until (as the Psalmist says) their foot has well-nigh slipped. Now, in such hours of heart-sinking the man in earnest will turn straight to God, and lean with all his weight on the Almighty. But just as Bunyan's pilgrim in the valley was mightily cheered by the sound of a

[1] A. Porritt, *John Henry Jowett*, 74.

human voice there, so in a man's worst hours the sun may shine again at the right word from comrade or from friend. We remember the story of the midshipman who for the first time in his life was under fire. To his horror he felt his cheek grow pale and his body tremble like an aspen. But his old captain put his hand upon his knee and said, 'Courage, boy, you'll be right in half an hour. The first time I was under fire I was exactly as you are, only worse.' That sentence practically saved the lad. He became a gallant commander in the Navy. A sneer at that critical moment would have ruined him; a word of cheer brought him to himself.

¶ Who that has once read the *Autobiography* can ever forget the story of Mark Rutherford's induction to his first church? He describes the ardour with which he preached. The great truths that he uttered meant everything to him; and he poured out his soul with a pent-up intensity of passion. And then? 'After it was over I went down into the vestry. Nobody came near me but the chapel-keeper, who said *it was raining*, and immediately went away to put out the lights and shut up the building. I had no umbrella, and there was nothing to be done but to walk to my lodgings in the wet.' Everybody knows what followed. The overwrought nerves collapsed. There came a terrible breakdown: his reason staggered. He eventually left the ministry. It is a sad story. If only some good earnest soul had shaken hands with him that first Sunday night and expressed agreement with, or even interest in, the words that he had uttered! But there was only the chapel-keeper; and he only said that *it was raining*![1]

2. Encouraging is not always easy. To learn the mastery of that most heavenly art calls for deeper things than we imagine. We never encourage unless we understand, unless there is the touch that tells of brotherhood. Where *that* is wanting, the fairest of all words are but vacant chaff well meant for grain.

True encouragement is sometimes unconscious. It is when we never think to hearten anybody that sometimes we do it most effectually. 'No man or woman of the humblest sort,' says Phillips Brooks, 'can really be strong, gentle, pure and good, without the world being better for it, without somebody being helped and comforted by the very existence of that goodness.' But though it only demand a greeting or a smile, no ministry is insignificant with love behind it. If a sneer can turn a man from what is good, why should a smile not turn him from the bad? Nothing is trifling if brotherhood inspires it. That is the secret of the rich encouragement which men find in the Lord Jesus Christ. He understands. Here is a Friend who has sounded all the depths. It is that which has reinforced ten thousand hearts and made the downhearted brave and strong again.

It takes so little to make us sad—
Just a slighting word or a doubtful sneer,
Just a scornful smile on some lips held dear
And our footsteps lag, though the goal seemed near
And we lose the joy and hope we had,
So little it takes to make us sad.

It takes so little to make us glad!
Just a cheering clasp of some friendly hand.
Just a word from one who can understand—
And we finish the task we long had planned!
And we lose the fear and doubt we had,
So little it takes to make us glad![1]

[1] F. W. Boreham, *The Nest of Spears*, 268.

[1] *Christian World*, Oct. 7, 1926.

CHEERFULNESS

Acts xxvii. 22, 25, 36.—'And now I exhort you to be of good cheer. . . . Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God. . . . Then were they all of good cheer.'

One of the wonders of the war-time was the persistent cheerfulness of our men. Their buoyant spirit rose triumphant over seas of trouble. The darkest night and the tightest corner resounded with their 'Cheerios.' There is a famous story of an ancient Greek, one of the immortals of Thermopylæ, who, when told that the arrows of the Persian host would

darken the sun, gaily replied, 'So much the better, then we shall fight in the shade.' In all probability St Paul was familiar with that story, and he would certainly have enjoyed it. For it is the same spirit which he himself most signally displayed in the hour of danger.

There are two words in the New Testament which are translated 'be of good cheer.' The one is frequently on the lips of Jesus, who seems to have been accustomed to go about bidding all sorts of despondent people cheer up. The other is found in the passage before us. Both are stirring and heartsome words. But if there is any difference between them, it is that St Paul's word is more sprightly and has a touch of gaiety about it. For instance, it is the word used by St James where he says, 'Is any merry (or cheery), let him sing.' Accordingly we shall not go far wrong if we picture the Apostle on the crowded deck of that doomed ship, bright and alert amid a mass of despairing orientals, moving about from group to group, with a 'Cheerio' for each.

I

Natural Cheerfulness

Addison distinguishes cheerfulness from mirth. 'Mirth is short and transient, cheerfulness fixed and permanent. Mirth is like a flash of lightning that breaks through a gloom of clouds, and glitters for a moment; cheerfulness keeps up a kind of daylight in the mind, and fills it with a steady and permanent serenity.'[1] In respect of natural cheerfulness there are great differences among men. Some have a native vigour of spirit, an inborn vitality and zest in living which throws a radiance over everything. Ancient Greece was richly endowed with this spirit in the days of her glory. 'O Solon,' exclaimed the Egyptian priest, 'you Greeks are always young.'

Such natural cheerfulness is a tremendous asset. It stimulates and invigorates. 'Give us, oh, give us,' says Carlyle, 'the man who sings at his work! Be his occupation what it may, he is equal to any of those who follow the same pursuit in silent sullenness. He will do more in the same time—he will do it better—he will persevere longer. One is scarcely sensible of fatigue when he marches to music. . . . Wondrous is the strength of cheerfulness, altogether past calculation its power of endurance. Efforts, to be permanently useful, must be uniformly joyous—a spirit all sunshine—graceful from very gladness, beautiful because bright.'[1] All experience confirms this verdict that cheerfulness is a great tonic, a spring of health and vigour. As Solomon says, 'A merry heart doeth good like a medicine' (Prov. xvii. 22).

It must be observed, however, that it has its limitations. It is apt to be unsympathetic. The cheerful idiot breaks in upon sadness with some tactless remark. The happy child of fortune assures us with easy optimism that 'all's right with the world.' Boisterous health lacerates frayed and sensitive nerves. 'As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart' (Prov. xxv. 20). It is also apt to be unstable, this natural cheerfulness, fading often when youth fades, and giving place to dull melancholy with the approach of age. At its frailest it may be little better than the gaiety of the moth that flutters round the candle, or the insect that dances for one bright hour in the sun and then is gone. The gaiety of the Greeks had something of this evanescence. In the prospect of old age and death it too often gave place to a desolating feeling of hopelessness. When its natural supports of youth and health were withdrawn it could not but collapse. How different was the cheerfulness of Socrates, the wisest of the Greeks. What a heartsome figure he makes, there in the prison, with the cup of poison in his hand and his weeping friends around him, his the only cheerful face as he argues with them, gently chides them, and rallies them with quiet humour.[2] There you see the cheerfulness of faith, founded upon a rock and rising serene above the waters of death, for Socrates had attained to the belief that whether we live or die we are in the hands of God.

II

Christian Cheerfulness

Such was the cheerfulness of St Paul. 'Be of good cheer,' he says, 'for I believe God.' It is true that he had in this particular crisis a very special Divine assurance of his own

[1] *Spectator*, No. 381.

[1] J. I. Vance, *Tendency*, 154.

[2] Plato, *Phædo*.

personal safety and of the salvation of the whole ship's company. Under such conditions, one might say, it would be an easy matter to keep up one's spirits. But it was not alone, nor mainly, upon this special assurance that St Paul's faith rested, for another man in his place might have dismissed it as a pleasant but baseless dream. Through his faith in Christ the Apostle had the general assurance that 'all things work together for good,' that, come what may, be death or life the appointed lot, 'in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us'; which assurance is the common possession of all believers, and ought to be in their hearts the enduring ground of optimism and of all good cheer.

Cheerfulness is an essential element of the Christian spirit. The New Testament, as has often been pointed out, is a heartening book. There is not a dull or depressing note in it. Its tone throughout is joyous and invigorating, the expression of a new Divine Spirit which rises gloriously triumphant over all the ills of life. It is not merely a victorious spirit, but a spirit so sure of victory that it can afford to laugh and sing. Such is the Christian spirit as it has manifested itself in history. Think of the gaiety of St Francis and his poor friars, who called themselves 'God's gleemen,' and sang their way like troubadours over all Europe. Or think of Santa Teresa, vivacious to the last, making the cloisters of Avila ring with her merry peals of laughter. 'No words,' says one of her biographers, 'can give any idea of the glad cheerfulness, the holy joy, the serene composure which reigned in that little world.' It is customary to paint our own Covenanters and Puritans as wholly stern and grim, but they had their merry moods, and not least when they were looking cheerily into the face of death. One thinks of James Guthrie, who 'dined with his friends with great cheerfulness' an hour before his execution, and called for a bit of cheese, remarking that he was now beyond the hazard of indigestion. One thinks of Hugh M'Kail waking in the Tolbooth on the morning of his execution and hailing his fellow-prisoner blithely with an 'Up, John! You and I look not like men that are to be hanged this day, seeing we lie so long abed in the morning.'[1]

When gloom predominates it is a sure sign that the true Christian spirit has decayed. Some of the Scots Paraphrases are of a most melancholy cast, declaring that

> ills on ills, by Heaven's decree,
> in man's estate are found,

warning the young that

> soon the shades of grief shall cloud
> the sunshine of thy days;
> And cares, and toils, in endless round,
> encompass all thy ways.

Such sentiments are not in harmony with the Christian spirit, but are confessedly drawn from the Old Testament, and particularly the Book of Job. They are in fact the product of the age of Moderatism, when the brightness of the gospel was obscured and the joy of salvation was lost. At such times the wings of faith droop, the heavenly vision fades, the radiance dims. Then the world becomes a vale of tears, and life a dismal progress to the grave. It is a thousand pities that such heathenish melancholy should ever have been presented as the Christian view of life. Yet many have come to think that a sigh is more saintly than a smile, and that a certain dull resignation is the height of piety. They mention the consolations of the gospel in the most mournful tones and find comfort in the gloomiest anticipations. Like the pious Mrs Hankey, who says, in consoling the mother who feels lonely now that the last of her daughters is married, 'Never mind, Sarah, and don't you worry yourself. Now that the weddings are over, the funerals will soon begin.'[1] We have all met with such Job's comforters and been offered draughts from their bitter cup. Let us have courage utterly to deny to such a spirit its right to the Christian name. 'It is necessary,' says Dr Dale, 'for some people to remember that cheerfulness, good spirits, light-heartedness, merriment are not unchristian nor unsaintly. We do not please God more by eating bitter aloes than by eating honey. A cloudy, foggy, rainy day is not more heavenly than a day of sunshine. A funeral march is not so much like the music of angels as the songs of birds on a May morning. . . . The great Christian

[1] J. Howie, *Scots Worthies*, 362.

[1] E. T. Fowler, *The Farringdons*, chap. iii.

graces are radiant with happiness. Faith, hope, charity—there is no sadness in them.' [1]

In recent years there has been a wide-spread revolt against the spirit of religious gloom. The religion of healthy-mindedness in its various forms is the popular cult of to-day. This is all to the good, so long as it is well grounded. Where it is simply the expression of a shallow optimism, or where, as in the case of Christian Science so called, it is based upon an absurd denial of the reality of sin and all the ills that flesh is heir to, it is bound sooner or later to collapse. One gravely fears that many are merrily going forward in the spirit of that 'brisk lad Ignorance' of whom Bunyan tells, who found little trouble even in the dark river, being ferried across by one Vain Hope, but only to meet with shame and rejection at the heavenly gate. True Christian cheerfulness comes to him who has faced the facts, has sounded the depths, has found a sure anchorage for his soul in God, and who can meet every change of fortune with a joyful *Quis separabit.* Like St Paul amid storm and wreck he is undismayed. He can say with Hopeful, even in the dark river, 'Be of good cheer, my brother, I feel the bottom, and it is good.'

III

The Culture of Cheerfulness

It is not to be supposed that in a world like this cheerfulness can be consistently maintained without effort. Life to the majority is no picnic; rather it is a toilsome journey, over rough and stony roads, with the sky often dark and threatening overhead, with many a failure and disheartenment. St Paul himself confesses to having had his black moods. Abraham Lincoln in the agony of the American civil war said, 'Had I not laughed, I would have died of a broken heart and a frenzied brain.' [2] Spurgeon, when some writer had referred to his sunny cheerfulness as if it were spontaneous and effortless, sighed and said, 'If he only knew.' These all had to fight depression, and maintain their cheerfulness by deliberate choice and strength of will. So must we all, making it our conscious aim and using every aid which Christian experience approves.

Unselfish action is one of the best aids to cheerfulness. St Paul is the cheeriest man on board ship, because the most self-forgetful and the most active in serving others. As he breaks the bread and ministers to that dejected crowd he has no time to brood. So does every one find who will but make the experiment. So long as you sit brooding, the gloom will only deepen and the trouble increase. But be up and doing for others, and you will surely find the clouds begin to break and gleams of sunshine to appear. 'Join the great company,' writes Helen Keller, 'of those who make the barren places of life fruitful with kindness. . . . The great enduring realities are love and service. Joy is the holy fire that keeps our purpose warm and our intelligence aglow. Resolve to keep happy, and your joy and you shall form an invincible host against difficulty.' [1] Health, it has been said, in the spiritual realm as in the physical, 'lies in labour, and there is no royal road to it but through toil.' And it must be self-forgetful. Centred in self, we miss all that is best in life, all that gives it dignity and power and value, all that connects things temporal with things eternal. To have true joy, true cheerfulness, we must have the Christ-spirit within us. Consideration for our neighbour, not ourselves, is the best armour against depression. Service to others is a ladder out of misery and unhappiness.

Another fine aid to cheerfulness is persistently to fix the mind on the bright side rather than on the dark. His biographer says of Gladstone that by a deliberate act of will he turned his mind away from all that was base to fix it upon things noble and good. So, if we would maintain our Christian cheerfulness, we must fix our attention on the bright things and on the bright side of the dark things. There is a crook in every lot, as Thomas Boston says, but the sky is never wholly dark, and if we are on the outlook we shall not fail to see the rift in the clouds where the sun is breaking through. In fact we see just what we choose to see, and our own spirit gives its colour to the landscape. Two illustrious heads of colleges in Oxford lay dying, Jowett sociable and kindly, Mark Pattison a cynic. Jowett sent a message to Pattison, 'You have seen so much good in the world that you may be hopeful of the future.' 'I have seen so much wrong in the world,' snarled Pattison from his pillow, 'that I have

[1] *Week-day Sermons*, 140.
[2] J. D. Brown, in *The Cheerful Life*, 76.

[1] S. Fallows, *Health and Happiness*, 223.

no hope for the future.' Truly said our Lord, 'If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.' There are those who can see only the spots in the sun; there are also those—and theirs is the Christian view—who can find a star in the darkest night. This is the temper of great souls who have learnt the reality of their great God. Sir Thomas More, when he heard that his mansion and granary at Chelsea had been burnt, wrote to his wife, and, instead of lamenting his loss, bade her find out if any poor neighbours had stored their corn in the granaries, and to recompense them, and discharge no servant until he had another abiding place; and lastly, 'to be of good cheer and take all the household with you to church, and there thank God for what He has given us, and what He has left us.' Then he adds, 'I pray you, Alyce, with my children, to be merry in God.'[1]

A most Christian exhortation! 'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice.' The heavenly treasure is not perishable. 'Your joy no man taketh from you.' The things that are shaken may be removed, but those things which cannot be shaken will still remain. This has ever been the stay and strength of the believing heart, shining overhead with the constancy of the stars. So we find the prophet registering a holy vow: 'Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation' (Hab. iii. 17–18).

How many souls in distress have resolutely maintained this cheerful faith, and have found it to be a refuge from the storm and as springs of water in a thirsty land? Jeremy Taylor says that 'Christianity is nothing else but the most perfect design that ever was, to make a man happy in his whole capacity,' and in the evil day he proved its value and sufficiency in his own experience. For when trouble on trouble came upon him—his house despoiled, his family turned out of doors, his estate sequestrated—he is still able to say, 'They have not taken away my merry countenance and my cheerful spirit, and a good conscience: they have still left me the providence of God and all the promises of the gospel, and my religion, and my hopes of heaven, and my charity to them too. And still I sleep and digest, I eat and drink, I read and meditate; and he that hath so many causes for joy is very much in love with sorrow and peevishness if he loses these pleasures and chooses to sit down on his own little handful of thorns.'[1] Alas, how common a practice it is, even among Christian folk, to sit down each one 'on his own little handful of thorns,' greatly to our own discomfort.

Some murmur, when their sky is clear
And wholly bright to view,
If one small speck of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue.[2]

But surely it is a healthier exercise, as it is undoubtedly more Christian, to turn our eyes towards the things that are unseen, and train ourselves to estimate with St Paul that 'our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'

IV

The Influence of Cheerfulness

Finally, let it be observed that nothing is more infectious than cheerfulness. See how St Paul's spirit triumphed over storm and wreck, till new hope began to dawn in the eyes of that disheartened crowd, and at length 'they were all of good cheer.' We know how susceptible a crowd is to influences of that sort. 'When a happy person enters the room,' says R. L. Stevenson, 'it is as if another candle had been lighted. They may not be able to demonstrate the forty-seventh proposition, but they demonstrate the worth-livingness of life.'[3] Stevenson himself constantly preached the gospel of cheerfulness, the duty of meeting the world with 'a glorious morning face.' And, as Gibbon says of William Law, 'he believed all that he professed and practised all that he enjoined.' For, doomed as he was to a life of ill health, gaiety was his cardinal quality, so that even when imprisoned in the sick-room with slowly ebbing strength, 'a childlike mirth

[1] W. Y. Fullerton, *Life's Dusty Way*, 80.

[1] W. Y. Fullerton, *Life's Dusty Way*, 81.
[2] Archbishop Trench.
[3] J. Kelman, *The Faith of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 244.

leaped and danced in him: he seemed to skip upon the hills of life.' And so his writings and his example have been a mighty word of good cheer to this generation, and have brightened many a discouraged heart.

'If,' says Ward Beecher, 'God gave you a cheery spirit, lift up the careworn by it. Wherever you go, shine and sing. For in every household there is drudgery, and often there is sorrow, and often low-thoughted evil. If you come with a cheerful and buoyant nature—in the name of God, do not lay aside these royal robes of yours. Let humour bedew duty. Let gaiety take charge of dulness. So employ these qualities that they shall be to life what carbonic acid is to wine—making it foam and sparkle.'[1]

R. L. Stevenson[2] quotes a fine story from the diary of his grandfather, the builder of the Bell Rock Lighthouse, how when a frightful storm broke over them and threatened to engulf the ship, he ventured to look up and was much reassured when he saw the watch on deck who was lashed to the mast but 'appeared to smile.' If, looking upward through the mirk and storm, we have seen the face of One whose smile has brought reassurance and peace to our hearts, if we have heard His voice bidding us be of good cheer, then it becomes our high duty, as it is our privilege, to reflect the radiance of that smile and to echo that heavenly word of cheer to brighten some fainting brother's path.

J. H. Morrison.

Bondservants of Christ

Acts xxvii. 23.—'The God whose I am, whom also I serve' (R.V.).

These words of St Paul are a glad testimony to his standing and his service, given in the midst of the heathen company on the Alexandrian corn-ship at a time when each man expected every moment to be his last. 'I belong to God, and I am His slave.' The way in which Paul always speaks of himself as a slave is one of the most significant facts of the New Testament. This once haughty and independent Pharisee, in his words and in his writings, ever dwells upon the fact that Jesus Christ has bought him, and that he belongs no longer to himself. As Sir William Robertson Nicoll has said: 'St Paul is a captive, a prisoner, a slave of Jesus Christ; but he exults in his bonds, vaunts himself of his fetters, and wears them as proudly and lightly as a girl wears the bracelet her lover has clasped round her happy arm.'

How sweetly doth 'My Master' sound! 'My Master!'
As ambergris leaves a rich scent
Unto the taster,
So do these words a sweet content,
An oriental fragrancy, 'My Master.'[1]

There are three ways in which we may think of the slave: as a debtor, because of the liability which he is unable to meet; or as a prisoner, because of the poverty by reason of which he is unable to extricate himself from his entanglement; or as a profitable possession, because of the labour which he is able to render in exchange for the debt which he still owes. Now Jesus Christ, by His work upon the Cross, not only has made us spiritually solvent and struck off our fetters, but also needs and claims our service. One thing let us always bear in mind—that the spirit of Christ, when it possesses a man, makes all his service more profitable. This is not merely the case with what we know as Christian work; it is true of every kind of work. If we are serving in any capacity, and yield our heart to Jesus Christ, we shall not only find that His possession changes our inner life; it will, if it be real at all, ennoble our outer conduct. We recall the case of the slave who before he deserted was unprofitable to his master, but after his conversion was sent back with this label of Christian commendation, 'formerly unprofitable, but now profitable.' In Christ not only is our past blotted out, and our present brightened: our future is bespoken. That is involved in our deliverance. Ours must be a service that costs, a life that is devoted in its allegiance. Because our debt of sin has been paid, we are eternally indebted to Christ, and pledged to pay in hourly instalments of love an account that grows higher in the paying. And we owe, further, that debt of love to others, which is the one human debt the Christian is permitted to leave partially unpaid.

[1] D. Wallace, *The Secret of Serenity*, 75.
[2] *A Family of Engineers.*

[1] George Herbert.

There was a striking word used upon the Mount of Transfiguration, when the Redeemer talked with the two Old Testament leaders about 'his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.' The word translated 'decease' is in Greek 'the exodus,' and we think of the Divine sevenfold call: 'Let my people go, that they may be bond-servants to me.' Moses and Elias spoke of 'the exodus' which He should accomplish at Jerusalem, paying the price of those whom the world held in bond, bidding their captivity cease, and leading them out into a triumphant service to Him. This is the gospel truth of which Professor Denney has so well said: 'To evade it, or to let it fall into the background, is not to drop a Jewish misconception which the Christian spirit has outgrown; it is to pluck the heart out of the Christian religion, it is to stifle praise in the birth, and cut devotion at the root.'

In the old heathen world every slave would desire to be free, and one of the ways in which he could obtain his freedom was by saving money slowly till he had enough to buy it. When he had done this, he and his master went to the temple of a heathen god. The slave paid the price of his ransom into the treasury, and the priest, in the name of the god, paid the money over to the master, and gave him his discharge. The slave henceforth belonged to the god and gained his freedom.

1. *This freedom means emancipation.*—The first result of purchase by the god is emancipation from old obligations. Against all the world, and especially against his former master, he is a free man. And in saying this we must not forget how horrible those obligations of the slave were. Quite literally the words of Paul were true of him, 'the slave of sin.' Whatever the slave's desire might be, the heathen master had absolute rights for degradation or death; and when he was bought out from the old bondage and went along the streets of Rome, or Corinth, Ephesus, or Philippi, he was literally a man 'freed from sin.' It seemed to the slave as though a new life had begun. The man of the old days was practically dead; the man who was walking there as a *free* man seemed also a *new* man. And he had a new relationship. Paul's word again was literally true: 'He was a servant to the god.' And when Paul speaks exultantly about the glorious liberty of the children of God, he is using words which remind us that the same old heathen terms were transferable not only to Christian slaves, but to all Christians. The old service in which we were bound to sin is gone, if we will have it so; the old self which bent willingly to Satan is dead, if we will reckon on our union with Christ's crucifixion by an act of daring faith, and walk in participation of Christ's resurrection by an attitude of daily trust.

I count myself, O Saviour, dead with Thee!
By faith I also in Thy death have died:
Shall sin still have dominion over me—
The sin which on Thy Cross was crucified—

Thy Cross and mine, since I, by faith, was One
With Thee in condemnation, in the day
When God the Father made His willing Son
A sacrifice to put my sin away?

I count Thee, O my Lord, alive in me!
I know as surely as in Thee I died,
So surely Thou Thyself hast risen in me!
And ever more Thou wilt in me abide.

And all the wondrous graces which are Thine—
The glorious gifts which God in Thee has stored—
Come in Thy coming and with Thee are mine,
Since I am One with Thee, my risen Lord.[1]

2. *Our emancipation is total and complete.*—Now in most cases it was so with the Roman slave, but not always. Harrington Lees tells us that he has a copy of a papyrus which deals with an auction of a slave, held because of a technical difficulty which had arisen. Four men held shares in a slave, and one of the four gave the man his freedom. The other three were apparently unwilling to give it, and accordingly put their share in him up to auction. What the final solution was we are not told. But here was a man pulled two ways—the object of two claims, one of freedom and the other of slavery. We have known this in our own life. Our freedom has been partial, not entire. How can I become free indeed? Another significant phrase comes often in the papyri as a synonym for freedom. The slave is henceforth to 'do the things that he will'; and Paul repeated it when he spoke of divided ownership and of the possibility of 'not doing

[1] Edith H. Divall, *A Believer's Songs*, 80.

the things that ye would.' It is the term for absolute freedom. We cannot be half-free and half-bondslaves. Many of us want to go through life with Christ as debt-payer, and also to permit Satan to impose a service on us. Indeed, we have a lurking love for some of his service. But neither in part nor in whole has he any right to us. 'Ye are not your own.' We are not even half our own. Paul states the fact in the Epistle to the Romans, where he says, 'Having been freed from sin ye became enslaved to righteousness,' to Him who is the Righteous One. Is it not true that the Cross of Christ has often frightened us when we have come to realize the extent of the claim which it enforces upon us?

Is Christ's appeal really so terrifying? Said Samuel Rutherford: 'He that looketh to the white side of Christ's Cross, and taketh it up handsomely, findeth it just such a burden unto him as wings are unto a bird!' What burden are wings to a bird? They are not carried; rather, they carry it up from earth's mists into God's clear air. Just such an emancipation comes to him who takes up Christ's Cross as his burden—liberty to rise. This is the true aspect of the freedom which God entrusts to man. It is not licence which God gives His bond-servant when He sets him 'free to do the things he would.' It was said of Hudson Taylor that God had had His way with him so long that now he had his will with God. But that was because they both willed the same thing. The fact is that the man whose freedom has been effected by Jesus Christ does really do what he wants, because he wants to do God's will.

It's oh! to guess what man I might be, would
I but obey;
Is it I that heed at last the bidding, wend at
last the way?

¶ 'What does it avail for us,' asks Dr Maclaren, 'that the far-reaching power of Christ's Cross shoots out magnetic forces to the uttermost verge of the heavens, and binds the whole universe by silken blood-red cords to God, if it does not bind me to Him in love and longing?'

3. *This freedom is also perpetual.*—This is frequently insisted upon in the papyri. Legal penalties are mentioned, and the strongest injunctions are given that after the transference the slave no more returns into the possession of his master: 'The enfranchised shall never be made a slave again'; 'The slave is now the protégé of the god.'

Paul, too, speaks of it frequently. 'Be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.' 'Ye were bought at a price; become not men's slaves.' Satan will try to entangle us again, but God has forbidden it and has provided against it. It is all dealt with in this great freedom given to us in Christ. In Dr Deissmann's phrase, the Christian is protected by God, he is 'God's protégé.' Who can measure the comfort of the fact that, while the roaring lion does indeed go about seeking whom he may devour, there is One who is always ready to go about with equal diligence and greater power to snatch us out of his claws? The song sung in the fifteenth chapter of the Revelation, the triumphal anthem of the victors, says: 'They sang the song of Moses the slave of God, and the song of the Lamb.' The song of the Lamb! I suppose there is nothing that appears quite so lacking in capacity for conquest as a lamb, and yet that is the paradox of the Book of the Revelation from first to last. The Lamb that was slain is effective over the Lion that slew Him.

The Lion, he prowleth far and near,
Nor swerves for pain or rue;
He heedeth nought of sloth nor fear,
He prowleth—prowleth through
The silent glade and the weary street,
In the empty dark and the full noon heat;
And a little Lamb with aching Feet—
He prowleth too.

The Lion croucheth alert, apart—
With patience doth he woo;
He waiteth long by the shuttered heart,
And the Lamb—He waiteth too.
Up the lurid passes of dreams that kill,
Through the twisting maze of the great Untrue,
The Lion followeth the fainting will—
And the Lamb—He followeth too.

From the thickets dim of the hidden way
Where the debts of Hell accrue,
The Lion leapeth upon his prey:
But the Lamb—He leapeth too.

Ah ! loose the leash of the sins that damn,
Mark Devil and God as goals,
In the panting love of a famished Lamb,
Gone mad with the need of souls.

The Lion, he strayeth near and far ;
What heights hath he left untrod ?
He crawleth nigh to the purest star,
On the trail of the saints of God.
And throughout the darkness of things unclean,
In the depths where the sin-ghouls brood,
There prowleth ever with yearning mien—
A Lamb as white as Blood ! [1]

Owned

Acts xxvii. 23.—'Whose I am, and whom I serve.'

Every strong life must acknowledge some master, and must bow to some domination. There must be some fixed centre around which its activities turn. The strength of a life is found in its fixed attachments, whether the attachments be virtuous or vile. The only utterly impotent life is the loose life, the life that has no centre, no rest, no point of obligation, no link of enslavement.

¶ There are a thousand good lives possible, of which we may have one, lives which are soundly good, or a thousand bad lives if you like, lives which are thoroughly bad. That's the old and perpetual choice that has always been, but what is more evident to me, more remarkable and disconcerting, is that there are nowadays ten thousand muddled lives lacking even so much moral definition, even so much consistency as is necessary for us to call them either good or bad ; they are planless, indeterminate lives, more and more of them, opening out as the possible lives before us, a perfect wilderness between salvation and damnation, a wilderness so vast and crowded that at last it seems as though the way to either hell or heaven would be lost in its interminable futility.[2]

We sometimes use a very expressive phrase in order to describe a man's relationship to some particular interest or thing. We say, 'He is possessed by it.' And in the phrase we name the owner. He is dominated by it, and the character of the master determines the character of the bondage. We can sometimes see the oppressive tyrant on the throne, and we can see the chains in which the miserable victim toils. It is quite easy to see that some people are possessed by the flesh ; the chain is fastened there. They cannot hide the ownership, and they go about, perhaps unconsciously, wearing the name of their master on their skin. There are others who are mastered by enslavements of a seemingly higher kind, which nevertheless enthral them in the most destructive bondage. But, leaving these lower plains of servitude behind, there are levels of noble attachment, where ownership is the parent of liberty, and where firm constraint is the mother of light and grace.

¶ 'Some time ago,' says Dr Jowett, 'I spent a few hours in the ample and wealthy library of a most enlightened man. Round about the walls of the stately room, wherever the all-obtruding books would grant a little space, my friend had hung portraits of the men who had been contributory influences in the shaping and colouring of his thought and life. And there the portraits were, indicating the principal tributaries which had helped to make the main stream of his life. And as I moved about from one to the other I came to one, all-prominent and imposing, which reflected the noble masculine face of Browning. And as I gazed upon its homely, rugged strength, my friend quietly said, "I owe myself to him." '

There is nothing impoverishing in our recognition of the ministries of men, if only we use these minor attachments as helpmeets to the supreme attachment in whose ministry these noble masters toil. Owners we must have. Owners we have, noble or base. Whose are we, whose hands are upon us, moulding us, deciding our movements, gripping us in their welcoming or forbidding restraint ? The apostle Paul's chain of obligation is fastened to the very throne itself. The decrees of his owner run throughout the universe, and he is the bond-slave of the eternal God.

1. How did Paul arrive at this willing and jubilant sense of being owned by Jesus Christ ? The Apostle always sought to be obedient to the highest he knew. Whenever some gracious heavenly vision was unveiled before his eyes, he sought to incarnate the vision in strong and noble task. 'I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.' Let him be sure that the

[1] Ruth Temple Lindsay.
[2] H. G. Wells, *The Research Magnificent.*

light before him was not a deceptive fire; let him know for certain that the gleam was some pure ray from the Great White Throne, and he was daring and immediate in its pursuit. Paul did not waste his vision. He sought to obey the Master's great decree in order that he might realize His gracious promise: 'While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be children of light.' This was Paul's character before he ever saw the Christ. All his blinds were up, and all his windows were open to receive the light and air of the morning.

It was a very receptive man who walked the way to Damascus on the day when he met the Lord. It was a man who had been greatly practised in obeying heavenly visions. And on his way to Damascus 'suddenly there shone round about him a light from heaven,' and he knew the light. He knew it by that disciplined power of discernment which he had been refining through many days, and he was taken into the awful secrets of the Almighty. It was a marvellous experience, mysterious and inexplicable, but no more mysterious and inexplicable than countless other lives in which the ministry of redemption has been wrought.

In that unspeakable and all-dominating experience on that lonely road Paul recognized three things.

(1) *The Power of God.*—His own transformed experience gave him sufficient witness of that. There was power enough in that wayside revelation to rearrange all his mental furniture, to overthrow many of his traditional ideas, and to unveil something of the glory of the Messianic Kingdom. He recognized that he had met the power of God, for it had uplifted his life as by the upheaval of an earthquake, and he could attribute it to nothing but the mighty, gracious hand of the eternal God. And whatever uncertainty remained in Paul's mind when the eventide fell that day, there was one thing sure: he had been in communion with Almighty God. 'Thine is the power.'

(2) *The Love of God.*—Was there ever a more willing pupil than Paul in what an old mystic once called 'the academy of love'? After his experience on the way to Damascus, he could scarcely talk about anything else. In Paul's great letters, as the apostle Peter says, there are 'many things hard to be understood,' but in all the bewildering heights and depths of his amazing thought the love of God gleams like the windings of a river, lost now for a moment, but shining again, to appear here and there over the entire scene. So far as Paul was concerned he interpreted all the power-experiences as love ministries, and in the illumination of his own soul he beheld the workings of redeeming grace.

(3) *The Rights of the Lord.*—A man who had come to know the power of the Lord, and the overwhelming love of his Lord, would most certainly acknowledge the rights of the Lord. He who had remade him, and in the recreation now sustained him by continued ministries of redeeming love, had certain rights which a reciprocal love would yearn to revere. The Lord who had given him love had a right to his heart. The Lord who had given him light had a right to his mind. The Lord who had given him power had a right to his will. The Apostle had been redeemed, and surely the heart ever turns to the love that has redeemed it, and offers itself as its slave. When we have experienced the uplifting power of the Lord, and in the school of Calvary have experienced the wealth of His redeeming love, we shall gratefully and gladly acknowledge the rights of Him who redeemed us.

2. When the consciousness of being owned possessed the great Apostle, it is not difficult to conceive what it would impart to his life.

(1) The sense of a great relationship always tends to impart a saving *dignity* to human life. To kings and princes a kingly bearing comes by birth, and about the lives of those whose high relationships are spiritual and eternal there belongs a certain dignity of demeanour which proclaims their royal birth and rank. All of which means that men who are owned by the Lord will share the walk of the Lord. They will keep astride with Him in the common way. Paul's life was full of an impressive dignity, because he was conscious of the high and intimate relationship between him and his Lord.

(2) And then, along with a sense of dignity there would go a very mellow *courtesy*. God's gentleness had made Paul great, and true greatness is ever natural, and therefore very gentle. The really great are rarely proud. What shall we say of the pride that resides in words like these: 'And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He has gone to be

guest with a man that is a sinner'? The King was not too proud to be his guest. But the men of artificial greatness could not descend to this lowly estate. Paul belonged to the Lord Himself, and the holy mark of that high lineage is found in his exquisite courtesies, in his tender compassions, in his pity for the down-trodden, the sore-stricken, and the poor. The ministry of high lineage is like the ministry of God's own grace.

¶ Livingstone treated every black man as if he were a blood-relation. He saluted the poorest with a very pleasant smile, and raised his gold-laced cap (the badge of his high office) a little above his head. Before the poorest African he maintained self-restraint and self-respect as carefully as in the best society at home.[1]

(3) The man who is owned by the Lord will walk with his Master in fields of welcome *service*. The man who joyfully cries, 'Whose I am,' will also exultantly shout, 'Whom I serve.' And the services will be wide and manifold. They will not be measured by small conventions, they will not be limited by fences built by men. They will go beyond common boundaries, and will be known to be Christian by their wealth and range. They will go beyond the confines of self; on every hand there will be communion with the children of men. They will range beyond the shore-lines of his country; even the finest patriotism will go down, and in the amplitude of his services there will be neither Jew nor Greek.

Anchors of the Soul

Acts xxvii. 29.—'Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.'

Here is the crisis of the story of St Paul's voyage and shipwreck—holding by their anchors and wishing for the day. All through the dark night they heard the great waves break with a dull, hard roar upon the unknown coast, and felt the blow of heavy seas upon the vessel's side, and counted the slow hours, wondering if possibly those anchors would hold till daylight! Have we not here a suggestion of the great strain that sometimes comes on human life? The old words set us thinking how there are other storms in life and other wrecks besides those which strew the sands with broken spars and wasted treasures—times when the soul can only hold fast by what anchors it has and wait for the day.

It is the holding fast of the soul that really matters most, even in what we are apt to think of as mere bodily dangers. To Paul watching there, the long night through, with death howling in the wind and roaring in the waves, it mattered far more that the anchors of his soul hold firmly, so as to keep him quiet and firm and self-possessed, than that those four anchors keep the vessel from drifting on the rocks. It is the greatest triumph in the world, in times of bodily danger, when men can keep calm and not lose their heads. For—have we ever thought of it?—there is a prayer that comes of distrust, that is a mere frantic clutching at the skirts of God for help, and that would just as soon clutch at anything else. The only prayer that is worth much is that which is like the hand of the little child placed 'in the Father's hand, "touching His right hand in the darkness"' and drawing a little closer to Him, and so waiting. That is the grand triumph, even if nothing can be done but to die, to die quietly, orderly, helping one another, cheering one another.

¶ This spirit of victory over circumstances is finely put by Anna Chapin in her poem, *The Spirit of the Sea*, written after the sinking of the 'Titanic.'

I have seen the warships crash their bows,
Said the Spirit of the Sea,
And galleons with their dragoned prows,
And pirate sloops where men carouse
Beneath the Black Flag free,—
And never a one,
When my will was done,
But was chattel and slave of me,
When I crushed them here in the deep forlorn,—
For a stronger than I has not been born,
Said the Spirit of the Sea!

I have seen the giant metal things
That were fashioned in this strange age,
Things that withstood my buffetings,
And that rode me down like armoured kings
Till I shrieked and stormed with rage:
So I waited a night
To show my might,
And I called the ice to me,—

[1] *Life of James Stewart of Livingstonia*, 90.

My sister white from the North afar,—
And the stateliest ship of ships that are
We broke in two on the great ice-bar,
Said the Spirit of the Sea!

But what could sea or ice avail
With the marvel that I found?
The merciless ice was weak and frail
To a love that could part and never quail,
And the courage that laughed—and drowned!
Oh, the deep seas know
How man is slow
To render his life in fee,
Yet those stood ranked in waiting bands,
And when it came to Death's demands
Gave Death their lives with open hands,
Said the Spirit of the Sea!

By all the winds that sweep the sea
And all the icebergs chill,
I have seen the last of the mysteries,
I have found a fire we cannot freeze,
A force we cannot kill!
With a host to prove
This fearless love
They have beaten our cruelty:
For with ice below and dark on high
I heard men sing as they came to die,—
I have met a stronger thing than I,
Said the Spirit of the Sea.

1. And so in all the straits and strains in life it is the holding fast of the soul that matters.

(1) There is the strain of intense *busy-ness*. Sometimes we feel worked up to the very last point. One thing after another comes upon us, each something that must be done if we can 'do' at all; and perhaps they are all pressing to be attended to at the same time. Our brow is aching, our mind in a whirl, and our heart is utterly weary of it; we see no end, no bright, sweet dawn, no quiet haven where we may bring our tasks to land and rest on grassy slopes beside the troubled sea—but only waves, and rocks, and utter collapse if we let go a moment! Have we not known that experience? And have we never felt tempted to make no more effort, but to let things take their course and go to ruin if they will?

(2) There is the storm of *trouble*. Sometimes trouble upon trouble comes upon life, like mighty waves striking upon a ship, till the heart feels as if it must give way utterly. That was what the poet depicted in the story of Job as messenger after messenger of woe came to him—the loss of all his wealth, the loss of his children, and then, when he needed all his strength 'to hold fast in his integrity,' the loss of his health. Is that not like life? Sometimes the fierce strain of pain; sometimes the ruin of all worldly fortune and prospects! Sometimes bereavement, overwhelming the life in utter desolation! What anchors can hold the soul patient and true, to go, by-and-by, upon its course again?

¶ One of the happiest days of his life, Sir Edward Clarke tells us,[1] was June 14th, 1879. He was then at the height of his popularity, successful in his career, in good health, happy in his home with a loving wife and children, earning a large income and with the prospect of a bright political future opening before him. On the date that he mentions—a beautiful Saturday in summer—he arranged an excursion with his wife and children to Richmond.

'After a pleasant hour there we walked on through the park to Twickenham Ferry. My dear wife was full of joy and pride, my girl of ten and my boy of seven danced along beside us. We were all in perfect health, all as happy as human souls can be; no earthly blessedness was denied us.

'I have never since that day felt the glow of perfect happiness without trembling to think of what the future might have in store.

'Within a week my dear mother's health had broken down, and she had passed into the condition of a hopeless invalid, to linger on for three years of mental and physical decay. Within a month a sudden and previously unknown or unnoticed cough had alarmed me about my wife, and I had received from Sir Andrew Clarke, to whom at once I took her, a letter telling me that her lungs were so seriously affected that she could not live for more than two years. In less than four months my darling little Mabel, who on that June day had looked a very picture of childish life and beauty, died of tubercular meningitis.

'So in three years from that day when I seemed to touch the very height of earthly happiness, child, wife, and mother were all to be lost.'

(3) And the fiercest strain of all is that of

[1] *The Story of My Life*, 153.

temptation. Sometimes a life is driven by its desperate want, or by its fierce passions, right on the very rock of some great sin, a life that to the world looked strong and seaworthy, utterly wrecked and lost! But is that all the story? Before that final wreck, there was the being driven by want or passion; the skies growing darker; losing sight of all heavenly lights by which, before, the life was steering; the sense of drifting towards a great crash. And then the despairing effort, the putting out of the very last anchors of the soul, trying just to hold clear of wreck until the deep darkness and helplessness shall have lifted. How many there always are who are just holding on at the last strain.

2. We need to have with us, as we sail these changing seas of life, strong anchors of deep, immovable conviction and faith that may reach down to the very rock of everlasting fact, and being which abides beneath the stress and storm! The ties which the soul can establish with the deep foundation of the moral universe are very various, and men no more carry the same number of anchors than ships do. But there are three that all should have.

(1) *Human Love.*—It does not matter what the strain is—danger, or pain, or toil, or sin—if we only love someone dearly enough to lift us out of thinking of self, how it helps us to hold on! One of the grandest recipes for getting over fear is love. When there is a shipwreck it is not those whose first thought is of some dear one whom they long to save who fall into panic and begin wringing their hands or rushing wildly about. Love lends calmness as well as strength. There is no way of forgetting one's own pain like thinking of someone else's. And what is it that keeps many a poor fellow at work when feeling as if he could not go on—what is it helps him to hold on? Just the thought of the loved ones at home.

And so in the fierce strain of temptation. If ever we do come near some great sin—and there are often terrible abysses and whirlpools very near to noble lives—let us put out that anchor of love! Think of those dear ones, whose lives are twined about with ours! We might face our own shame, but could we face theirs? Could we bear that awful sorrow of their finding out that we are not what they have thought us? Let us hold by that strong cable of love, feel at it, tighten it. The more we do so, the firmer it will hold.

(2) *The Sense of Rightness.*—There is a feeling that, deep down beneath the apparent aspect of things, beneath all considerations of whether they are painful or pleasant, the question is, whether they are right. Often, when it is all dark above, nothing to shape one's course by, and danger and difficulty whichever way we turn, the one great anchorage of life is in the sense of a thing being right, and in holding simply to that. This must have been what enabled those old martyrs to hold fast to the very end! Torture was waiting for them, agonies that it is impossible to conceive of one's being able to endure. And sometimes love, instead of being an additional anchor, was one of the things that tried to drag them from their anchorage—wife or friend clinging piteously to them and beseeching them to say the word that would set them free! But they felt they had simply to do the right—the one thing not to be done was to lie or betray their faith—and that, though they could not measure themselves against that terrible agony, if they should hold to the right from moment to moment God would help them through.

¶ Bernard Palissy, a poor mechanic, had been thrown into the old Bastille, in St Bartholomew days, for his Protestantism. Charles IX. came to visit him, and threatened him with these words: 'Palissy, I am forced to give you up to death, unless you renounce your religion.' 'Forced!' answered the triumphant prisoner; 'they that force you, King Charles, cannot force me. I can die; and so I am free. But you and all your nation cannot compel me, simple potter as I am, to bend my knee to an idol, or a lie.' [1]

(3) *The Sense of Spiritual Realities.*—There comes to our help the blessed gospel of Christ. At times our own consciousness of our souls and of God is vivid and real, but we have weaker hours, when those things that sometimes seem so intensely, vividly real become vague and shadowy, and the heart hardly knows whether it does really believe in them. Then comes in that marvellous light and power of Christ, making clear and certain things which, to our own thinking and questioning alone, sometimes seem dim: 'Be not afraid of them that kill the body; after that there is no more that

[1] E. H. Hopkins.

they can do!' No more? Why, what more could there be to be done? is the question which in some moods is apt to flash to the mind. But as He says the words, the whole situation seems coloured with a new and stronger meaning. It is the soul that is the real abiding thing.

The soul, secure in her existence, smiles
At the drawn dagger, and defies its point.

And not only for danger. That sense of the soul's life as something that cannot die, is a still greater help in resisting temptation.

¶ An American preacher tells of a man who had passed through a long and severe struggle with sin. He had watched and prayed and striven, and sometimes he had kept right, and sometimes he had fallen so utterly that at last he was in despair, and longed to be out of life. He prayed for death, courted it, went into all manner of risk and danger hoping to meet it, till one day there came the thought: 'It is of no use; death would not mend the matter; you could live on somewhere else, and you would have to take up the struggle just where you leave it off—and only weakened and worsened by having run away from it.' That helped him, just the feeling of the soul going to live on!

In every way the most beautiful, tender, self-forgetful strength comes when any mere thought of self—even of the immortal self—is merged in that larger sense Christ gives us of the enfolding, all-possessing life of God. That seems to include and glorify all the other strengths which hold our life. There is the true anchor and sometimes almost the only one. There are times when love fails us; times when the sense of right does not come in. In the great desolation of sorrow simple faith in God is almost the only anchor. When some great love is gone from us, it seems small comfort to us that right is right. We do not want even consoling words at first; Job's friends were true, wise friends, sitting silent with him seven days without ever a word. Little by little the great violence of the storm passes, and a quiet shining of Divine tenderness comes upon the almost shipwrecked life.

When I am feeble as a child,
And flesh and heart give way,
Then on Thy everlasting strength
With passive trust I stay;
And the rough wind becomes a song
And darkness shines like day!

Holding Together

Acts xxvii. 30, 31.—'And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, . . . Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.'

This incident has the note of personal experience. It had evidently made an indelible mark on the man who wrote it. We can see the desperate efforts of the crew to avert disaster. We can hear the rush and roar of the tempest. We can picture the wild confusion and panic, and the dastardly attempt of the sailors to save their own skins and leave the ship and passengers to their fate. The traditions of seamanship have changed since then—our own nation has led the way. It is a sailor's business now—and he never dreams of anything else—to stand by the ship till the whole company is safe. That is the heroic law of the sea.

1. The story has very interesting parallels with our life. A ship is like a State. It is a little republic, a miniature nation. It is a self-contained community, with its own laws and regulations. Every member of the company is responsible to some extent for the safety of the whole ship on her voyage from port to port. The parallel teems with suggestions for our life together. We frequently speak of the 'ship of State.' 'The ocean of life' is a hackneyed phrase which lives because of its truth.

The paramount duty that faces a ship's company is to hold together. This duty becomes clear when we consider the basis on which we live our life. Our life is a social unity in which we are bound together below the surface, like the tangled roots of forest trees. And this dependence has an even wider range than our home-circle or acquaintanceships. It takes in the whole world. The bread we eat was grown on the plains of America and made by someone we never saw. The clothes we wear have passed through countless hands in a chain that may stretch across the world. The whole earth

gathers about our doorstep to minister to our comfort and our pleasure.

Each climate needs what other climes produce,
And offers something to the general use;
No land but listens to the common call,
And, in return, receives supplies from all.

The world is one big family. Every day it is being linked more closely. The great inventors are still concentrating on the problem of annihilating distance and making the world one neighbourhood. More and more, commerce and science are making men and nations like a ship's company who are out together on the same voyage. Everything is driving home the conclusion that we must hold together if we are to get through.

2. This very nearness has two great consequences.

(1) It has its *dangers*. There is the danger of friction. When people become intimate, temperaments may clash, purposes may cross, tempers may rise. The biggest test of character is for two people to go and live together. Strikes cannot paralyse a nation except in a complicated society. It is our very interdependence that makes the strike a tragic blow to the life of the community. It is the same with war. Three hundred years ago there was plenty of fighting, but only on a small scale and only among one or two nations. The conflagration was easily limited. But modern war, by the very nature of our nearness, involves the whole world.

There are other dangers—the spread of disease, for instance. If the practice of medicine had not kept pace with the growth of the community, our very nearness would induce diseases that would destroy the world. And there is a worse danger than disease—there is social sin and social crime. There are sins for which no individual is responsible, but in which all have a share. When the next revival comes, it will come, like all others, in a wave of repentance, but it will not be only our own personal sins of which we will repent when the light of heaven floods our life; it will be the social sins in which we share—the national pride which breeds wars, the poverty we permit to exist, the conditions we condone which a live social conscience would sweep away. No man can find a real peace with God for his own soul without facing the social sins in which he shares. For 'we are members one of another.'

(2) But this life together has its own *opportunities*. Toil can be lightened for thousands by the wise action of the community. Burdens which no single individual can bear for others the community can carry. There are the poor, who are beyond our individual help; but we can explore together some of the sources of poverty and dry them up. There will always be room for the good Samaritan picking up the man by the wayside. Communal philanthropy which sacrifices that personal touch will lose almost more than it gains. There is nothing that can be so soul-destroying as a system where the human touch is lost; but what a good Samaritan to thousands the community itself could be, if only we held together and realized our strength! There are tremendous resources lying unused which will come into play only as we get together. There are powers in our souls which will never be fully tapped till we have learnt the fellowship of service. For the strength of a community is more than the united strength of separate individuals. Inspirations awaken in a common struggle which one man alone can never find. Faith kindles faith. Fellowship awakens enthusiasm. In spiritual arithmetic two and two make more than four. They make a body with a new life, which finds its roots in God; for Jesus said, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'

3. If we are to hold together, the question at once arises, What is the condition on which we can so live together, overcoming the dangers and finding the strength? We must find the communal spirit. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there are people who talk a great deal about the community, who show very little real concern for the community. We shall have to get the right spirit before we shall get the ideal community. We cannot get away from the moral factor. Many people who dream of better conditions and a new system to make a new world forget that this new world, when we have it, will be a very difficult place to live in. It will demand tact, and unselfishness, and mutual sacrifice which, as things are, seem beyond us. We cannot

run a system based on spiritual lines without a spiritual dynamic. We cannot make an ideal world by force any more than we can make any other spiritual thing by force. Every beautiful thing takes love to make it.

¶ A writer describes the little garden of his early home which his mother used to keep. 'She used to say that, in the growing of flowers, love was as necessary as water. That seemed foolish to us. But somehow when she went away, flowers ceased to grow there.'

We are living in a world which God has given us on the condition that we put love into it, in all our relations with one another. It is the spirit of fellowship which alone can make men comrades in a common cause, in a common purpose, which can bring the ship to port. Except we hold together, we cannot be saved.

What qualities does this common life demand? There is the spirit of sincerity, of frank and open dealing. Where love reigns, the black cloud of suspicion is not allowed to gather. And there is the spirit of forbearance. We must learn tolerance of others' faults. We must cultivate patience. We must have the kindly judgment. We must put ourselves in the place of others. We must learn to feel their grievances and enter into their burdens. We have found ways of insulating ourselves against the shock of others' troubles by soft pads of comfort; or by the callous heart, till the world's agony, which makes the air electric with unrest, leaves our conscience unmoved. We must change all this. Sickness and sorrow and the sufferings of others are our great opportunity of binding others to us in a sympathy that would quicken the pulse of the whole community with a new life.

¶ Some of us are tempted to pray to God to send to earth again that bright angel of His, St Catherine. Her spirit it is we need to-day: she that in the great and fruitful mourning of her conscience viewed all the wars and woes that flooded Europe in her day, and cried, 'It is all due to me!' 'What unreason is this?' cried her friends and devotees. But it was not so. It was Christ's common sense, brought to so white and exalted a point of light that it seemed to blast them. And that Common Sense of Christ in her went like a purifying and reviving flame through Europe, as all who know her story know.[1]

[1] A. Boyd Scott, *The Heraldry of His Disciples*, 70.

And the common life demands self-sacrifice. It will mean loss to individuals, for it will have to be translated into terms of money. The poor will be richer, and the rich will be poorer. We shall need to learn to pay our income-tax with the same good grace as we give a large subscription to a charity. We shall need to put our hearts into the payment of our common dues. A tax can be as dear to God as the offering we make to the collection-plate or the subscription we give to a charity, if we have the spirit of the community. Sacrifice is part of the price we pay for the privilege of our common life.

4. Where are we to find this spirit? We can learn it only from Jesus. Part of the pathos of the whole movement of our time is that many are trying to be Christian without Jesus. They are trying to learn love without the power of the great Lover. We cannot learn the spirit of forbearance toward others save as we catch it from Christ's forbearance toward us. We cannot develop the spirit of trust save as we know what it means to be trusted by Christ with the great trust of His friendship. We cannot learn the spirit of sacrifice save at the Cross, which is the fountainhead of all self-giving. How are we to get rid of the hatred and suspicion and selfishness which set man against man? How are we to get rid of self? —that is the problem. There is only one answer. It must be crucified and slain in a great surrender to the Christ who masters us in the subduing discipline of His fellowship.

¶ Democracy must get rid of the natural man of each for himself, and have a new birth into the spiritual man, the ideal self of each for all. This is its great lesson. The monstrous heresy of self-worship, self-absorption . . . is the essentially irreligious idea. Nothing but a Church will do. The lecture-platform is no substitute for Sinai. Democracy is a religion or nothing, with its doctrine, its form, its ritual . . . above all, its organized sacrifice of the altar, the sacrifice of self. This is the deepest craving of human nature. All attempts to reconcile man's heroism to his interests have ever failed. There is no escape from the law of brotherhood. All solutions but this have had their trial, and all have failed.[1]

Christ reveals in His principles the only

[1] R. Whiteing, *No. 5 John Street.*

ground on which we can hope to live together in happiness and peace. The laws of the spiritual life which He lays down are the laws of human life in its reality; and we cannot expect either power or peace, except as we live in harmony with these, any more than we can expect a healthy body in defiance of the laws of health, or a well-built house which disregards the law of gravity. The reason why Christ's principles seem impossible is that we look at them apart from Jesus. When Christ gave that teaching to His disciples, the thing that made all the difference was that *He* was there. They were in His company. They heard His voice. They felt the power of His friendly love. His spirit alone can turn what look like impossible commands into practical politics. From Christ alone we catch the spirit which is the cement of society.

¶ Some time ago a book was published containing an account of a Communistic experiment which was made in Patagonia. A band of people, under a leader, went there to set up a new State, but the one thing on which he had made up his mind, and they with him, was that there was to be no religion. Christ was to be left out of the ship, as He is being left out to-day by many of the advanced Communists. This little society went on well enough for a time, till the first impulse was exhausted; then differences began to creep in. The power was gone, 'the spirit was departed,' selfishness broke out with all its accompaniments of vice and sin. At last, in sheer despair, the leader invented a god of his own and went preaching this caricature of a deity, with disastrous results. In the end the whole society was only saved from utter collapse by the advent of a man who preached Christ and brought the flame of faith to kindle their hearts into reverence, and purity, and brotherhood.[1]

The Meeting of the Seas

A Sermon to Young Men

Acts xxvii. 41.—'And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground.'

The place where the two seas meet is near the island of Salmun or Salmonetta. It is separated from Malta by a gap of a few hundred feet. This gap forms a race through which runs a strong current. When, therefore, with anchors cut away and foresail hoisted, the captain made for this creek, the current from the island of Salmonetta meeting the rollers coming in from the open sea produced such a swirl that the vessel would not answer to her helm, and her fate was settled. The captain, it seems, had intended to strand the ship, but the seas did it for him.

1. Note a few things that brought this ship into difficulty.

First of all there was discontent among her passengers and crew. They evidently did not like the place she lay in, Fair Havens. It was not a good harbour, it is true, but it was necessary to remain there longer for the safety of the ship. Farther on was the city of Phenice, in whose snug harbour they might winter, where something was going on ashore. It looks as if the passengers and crew were after a good time, and scouted the idea of any damage befalling the ship. In any event, the captain listened to the crowd rather than to Paul, who advised staying where they were. The infection of the crowd is as dangerous on board ship as elsewhere. The captain that allows his ship to be run by the crowd, the man who permits the crowd to determine his duties for him, is negotiating with disaster. In our moral affairs the temptations of the crowd are the hardest to resist.

In the next place, the ship fell into her trouble in the face of a certain premonition of danger. 'When the south wind blew softly,' they set sail. It was winter and this soft wind was really a storm-signal. The weather-wise knew well enough that it was a 'weather-breeder.' The shipmaster was aware of its significance, but doubtless thought he could run into port ahead of the storm it foreboded. The soft south wind! In the temptations of life we all know something of its lure. There is hardly a temptation that comes to us that does not have this forerunner. We should be intellectually and morally weather-wise. There is scarcely a wrecked life in the world that was not lured from its moorings by some soft, captivating, south wind.

Says Tweed to Till:
'What gars ye rin sae still?'

[1] J. Reid, *The Victory of God*, 183.

Says Till to Tweed :
' Though ye rin with speed,
And I rin slaw,
For ae man that ye droon,
I droon twa.'

Again, the shipmaster took the risks in spite of warning. The Apostle's admonition that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship but also of our lives, was met with impatience and rejection. This matter of advice, the sanity and wisdom of experience, how indifferent men are to it, even resentful. ' Cheap as advice ' is a proverbial saying, yet advice is often seen to be the most valuable thing in the world when we have thrown it away. It is heaven's gift to our inexperience. If we let our ears be open to good counsel, we shall often escape disaster by refusing to invite it.

2. What does the meeting of the seas signify in human life? Figuratively, the seas have many meeting-places in the lives of men.

When we yield to an evil desire, allow ourselves to be pulled into a current of wrong inclination, we are bound to meet unforeseen circumstances that increase our moral peril. When we once begin to take risks in wrong-doing trouble begins. The people of this ship were ignorant of the current that ran between Salmonetta and Malta. From the point where they cut away the anchors the lesser island appeared to be part of the larger one, and the danger was thrust upon them. In a life that is not upright men are often surprised by circumstances of which they did not dream. ' I can beat through that channel,' ' I can get round that reef,' ' I can weather that cape,' ' I can reach the open sea,' men are saying of the risks that lie in the wrong courses they take. But here is this unsuspected Salmonetta current, this fateful swirl, coming in at the wrong moment. The ship refuses to answer to her helm, and the man is gone. In the matter of venturing into wrong there is no safety except in absolute rectitude.

The seas meet when by self-indulgence we acquire the feeling that the practice of a wrong thing does away with responsibility. No insensibility, however, can set it aside. Indifference to it no more annuls it than blotting out the derelicts on a pilot-chart suspends look-out duty. Responsibility is positive and mandatory. We cannot play with it any more than we can with navigation. Responsibility, while it is a despot, is nevertheless the angel of human destiny. It holds us to the letter of Divine regulations. God has entrusted each one of us with a command—self-command—the noblest that will ever fall to us; and, fulfilling the duties of that command, we are to be ever eagerly alert to our responsibility. Any indulgence that dulls our sense of it is crime in the sight of our Lord.

The seas meet where men attempt to remedy one wrong act by another wrong act. Reading this thrilling story of shipwreck, we see that mistake succeeded mistake until the ship was stranded. Ulysses in his fear of Charybdis stood so close to Scylla that he lost a good part of his crew. When men do wrong to escape the consequences of wrong, they often plume themselves on their sagacity. And frequently they do seem to escape loss; but do they? No man can escape the moral consequences of a wrong act. He suffers some loss. This account of the ship says that the forepart stuck fast, but the hinder-part was broken with the violence of the waves. The man who commits a wrong to escape a wrong morally runs his ship ashore. Something always breaks up—his peace of mind, for one thing; his integrity of soul, for another.

¶ Huxley says, ' The gravitation of sin to sorrow is as certain as that of the earth to the sun, and I am convinced of the absolute justice of things.'

Opposing currents meet whenever we seek to justify moral delinquency by intellectual fallacy. It is still taught that our actions, right or wrong, are determined by our inheritances. Our life-ship is manned by our ancestors; they walk its deck, stand at its wheel, do its work. If we make a success of our abilities and opportunities, they do it; if otherwise, the curse of their derelictions is to blame. So much has been claimed for this doctrine that it would seem as if a man can be himself only in some descendant 150 years hence. This doctrine of inheritances is in some part true; but there is so much in it that is not true that a man can safely assume his own accountability. The dignity and honour of a ship's command lie in the fact that every member of the ship's company can and will do his duty.

The glory of our life is that every one of us is put here to do his duty, and our successes or lapses in the moral life should no more be credited to our ancestors than the winning or loss of a ship's battle should be attributed to the officers and crews that fought our ships long before our day.

¶ When William Ellery Channing was a very little boy, his schoolmaster said to one of his school-fellows, 'Why are you not a good child like William Channing?' 'Oh,' replied the boy, 'it is so easy for William Channing to be good.' We, perhaps, have looked round upon friends of ours to whom the conflict we have to maintain is altogether unnecessary. The foes we have to fight with they never meet. The victories which we have to win for ourselves were won for them generations ago by the ancestors whose blood is in their veins. Shall we complain? God forbid. Let us do for posterity what their ancestors have done for them, taking the rough conditions of our actual life, making the best of them, winning no praise from men for what we accomplish—for they know not the difficulty of the work—rejoicing in this humbly and reverently, that we have to give account of ourselves to God.[1]

3. The ship that carried Paul was lost, but everybody was saved. Passengers, officers, and crew had a hard time of it on the island, but each one got ashore with his life. But how glorious is the achievement where, with the saving of his soul, a man brings his ship safe into harbour, and has to forsake no part of his life on account of misdeeds and abandoned courses. It was a happy circumstance in the life of this shipmaster that he got ashore; but there was his vessel breaking up before his eyes! Many a good man has felt that though he has saved his soul he has lost his ship. As Saul of Tarsus, St Paul lost his ship; in his life as a young man, St Augustine lost his ship; as a soldier, Loyola lost his ship.

¶ Here are two verses written by an admiral of striking personality who put a simple creed into a nautical form, which he left as 'sailing orders' for those coming behind him—

In darkness and in danger, Lord,
On life's wild troubled sea,
The only chart to shape our course
Thy Holy Word shall be.

If Jesus be our Pilot,
Sure confidence we feel,
Thine eye, O God, above us,
A Saviour at the wheel.

From danger and from danger
With tattered sail we press
To Thee our God for shelter,
Our Refuge in distress;
With rocks and shoals to wind'ard,
And breakers o'er the lee,
Jesus alone can make us reach
The haven where we'd be.

[1] R. W. Dale.

The Need of the Christian Revelation

Acts xxviii. 4, 6.—'They said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer . . . They changed their minds, and said that he was a god.'

Wet, cold, weary, and anxious, the shipwrecked company huddled together on the shore in the early morning, and no doubt they were fearful of the reception they would get from the islanders who had been attracted to the beach. Their first question was, 'Where are we?' so completely had they lost their reckoning. Some of the inhabitants could speak Greek or Latin, and could tell them that they were on Melita, but most of the crowd spoke in a tongue strange to Luke, who calls them 'barbarians'—not as being uncivilized, but as not speaking Greek. But they could speak the eloquent language of kindness and pity. They had come down to the wreck not for plunder, but to help the unfortunates who were shivering on the beach in the downpour of rain, and chilled to the bone by exposure.

The first thing the inhabitants of the island did was to find some sheltered spot and to light a fire. It was no small service to attend to the immediate needs of nearly three hundred strangers. Paul said, 'They showed us no little kindness,' or, as the Revised Version has it, 'no common kindness'—their attention, courtesy, interest went beyond all expectation. These were not Christians, yet they were instinctively kind. Nansen said that he found the warmth of the Gulf Stream in the depth of the Arctic sea. And it was a pleasing surprise to find in the dark depth of paganism the warm living glow of a Christian grace.

¶ 'If you have to deal with bad people long,' says Dr Watkinson, 'the thing that will astonish you most is their goodness; if you have to deal with these people long, it is surprising how there shines out of them in fitful flashes the original divine splendour. A city missionary has witnessed that what impressed him most in prosecuting his work in dark neighbourhoods was "the goodness of the bad." He meant to say that he was astonished to find how abandoned men and women on occasion would flash out in heroism, melt in love, bleed in sacrifice, and, for the moment at least, reveal the purest, kindliest, sublimest qualities.'

Kindness was a beautiful flower to be found growing in Melita, that wild home of caprice and superstition. And yet there was something lacking. All this natural kindness, as the story goes on to show, was insufficient and inadequate.

1. Apart from the Christian Revelation there is *no guiding principle for human judgment.*

When the natives of the island set about the kindling of a fire Paul helped by collecting fuel. The act was characteristic. The man who had been foremost during the trying experiences of the preceding fortnight is still foremost when the danger is past. The curious incident that follows arises out of this act of useful service. As the Apostle threw his bundle of brushwood on the fire, a viper, roused by the warmth, darted at his hand before it could be withdrawn, and fixed its fangs. When the natives saw this malignant creature hanging from Paul's hand, they concluded there could be but one end to the incident. They said among themselves, 'No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped from the sea, yet vengeance suffers not to live.' They instantly leapt to a conclusion which was rash and precipitate—that this man was guilty of crime, and although he had been saved from the water, he was destined to die by the poison of the viper. They concluded that he was a criminal simply because the deadly creature fastened itself upon him.

We all do exactly the same thing as these pagan natives did when we interpret affliction as a retribution for wrong-doing. We are mistaken and unchristian when we judge between guilt and retribution, sin and punishment, wrong-doing and penalty. One of the most pathetic things in literature is that part in his *Second Defence of the English People* in which Milton defends himself against the abominable insinuation of Salmasius that his blindness was a Divine judgment for his sins. And we recall how Job's friends reasoned that he must be a great sinner, because they concluded that the calamities that overtook him must be the results of his wickedness. 'Remember, I pray thee,' said one of them, 'who ever perished, being innocent? or when were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same.' Or take a New Testament case, the story of our Lord curing the blind man at the Temple gate. The Pharisees' gratuitous assumption was that it was in consequence of this man's own sin or the sin of his parents that he was doomed to grope his way in darkness at noontide. Our Lord emphatically denied both accusations. And we seriously miss the Christian spirit when we misinterpret the purpose and motive of the Divine procedure in human lives.

The Apostle shook the deadly thing off into the fire again and was none the worse. Was it a miracle? it has been asked. It is, of course, possible that the snake was not poisonous, or that Luke misunderstood what was taking place in the barbarian mind. But the impression conveyed by the text is certainly that of an extraordinary preservation, as at Lystra. When the inhabitants found that the viper had produced no fatal harm, they gazed with wonder at Paul, and pronounced him to be a god. How quickly the pendulum swung to the other extreme. The same people who said 'no doubt this man is a murderer' almost instantly leapt swiftly to the conclusion that he was a god.

¶ Dr Samuel Johnson was a frequent visitor at the house of Mr Richardson, the famous novelist. One day, whilst Johnson was there, Hogarth called. Hogarth soon started a discussion with Mr Richardson as to the justice of the execution of Dr Cameron. While he was talking, he perceived a person standing at a window in the room, shaking his head, and rolling himself about in a strange, ridiculous manner. He concluded that he was *an idiot*, whom his relations had put under the care of Mr Richardson, as being a very good man. To his great surprise, however, this figure stalked forwards to where he and Mr Richardson were sitting, and all at once took up the argument. He displayed such a power of eloquence that

Hogarth looked at him with astonishment, and actually imagined that he was *inspired*.' [1]

It was a big jump of opinion from idiocy to inspiration; or, with these Maltese, from a murderer to a deity. These fitful flashes of vacillating opinion are caused by their not being based upon a deep moral sentiment. There may be bursts of generosity and gleams of gentleness in natures that show great deficiency under the strain of ordinary duty. Splendid acts of kindness and sacrifice are often rendered unsatisfactory because they are fitful, sporadic and unrelated to any fixed moral principle. Think of the incident of Christ's first sermon in the little synagogue at Nazareth—the awe and wonder that fall upon the congregation as Jesus begins to speak, the sense they feel of something indefinably holy and gracious in Him as He reads, with a thrill of emphasis never heard before, the great words of Isaiah: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.' It was as though an apparition of perfect goodness and perfect love stood before them, and they marvelled. Yet in a moment their wonder was changed to bitterness, rancour, and to murderous hatred, and they sought to cast him headlong from the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built. [2]

2. Apart from the Christian Revelation there is *no right conception of God*.

These people said of Paul, 'He is a god.' On another occasion he was accounted a god—by the semi-barbarous people of Lycaonia. What is it about Paul that has caused them so to raise their estimate of him that they are anxious to give him a place among the deities? Have they discovered in him moral qualities that are pure and exalted? Have they found in him a character so full of goodness and grace that its loftiness is an indication that it is more than human? No, they were not incited to this spirit of adoration by any recognition of moral qualities in the Apostle, but because he had done something remarkable; he was a miracle-worker; he was a great manipulator in the sphere of the wonderful. Their conception of God was very faulty, for they put the idea of the miraculous as the chief evidence of the Divine rather than great and supreme moral qualities. But their conception of God was not only faulty; it was also gross. All the evils that nestle in the human heart and deform and deprave human conduct were deified and found a place in the Pantheon of antiquity.

¶ Among the Greeks the people did not dream of turning to the gods for examples—they turned to Plato and Zeno—so in India moral action is not centred in God or in the gods; it is centred in the Law of Karma. Tulsi Das said, 'A man will be cast into hell for a thousand years if he presumes to imitate the gods.' Now I find Jesus centring morality in God and showing us that the nature of God is bound by the same moral laws as those that bind us. It is a great day for the human soul when it realizes that morality is not an accidental thing, but is centred in the ultimate truth of things, God. We are to be 'perfect' as our 'Father is perfect.' And Paul gives the astounding statement: 'Be ye imitators of God, as dear children.' [1]

But Jesus did not merely trace morality back to the heart of God, He showed that love, service, self-sacrifice were central in Christianity. And by His own sublime self-sacrifice He proved it.

What lacks, then, of perfection fit for God
But just the instance which this tale supplies
Of love without a limit? So is strength,
So is intelligence; let love be so,
Unlimited in its self-sacrifice;
Then is the tale true and God shows complete.

[1] F. W. Boreham, *Mushrooms on the Moor*, 139.
[2] W. J. Dawson.

Shaking off the Beast

Acts xxviii. 5.—'Howbeit he shook off the beast into the fire, and took no harm' (R.V.).

St Luke was, as we know, a physician. He was a physician certainly with a most remarkable gift for writing. It may well be that the very qualities which make a man a good physician are calculated to make him a good writer. The supreme quality, for example, of a good doctor is to see almost at a glance the salient point, the decisive and significant symptom. For the

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *Christ at the Round Table*, 121.

sake of that dominant fact he will be able to neglect and to banish from his mind for the moment smaller considerations which he sees at once are incidental and have no bearing upon the matter in hand. And this, of course, is the supreme qualification for fine writing, or fine painting, or great sculpture—to omit the unnecessary, the irrelevant, and merely temporary. It may have been that very quality, essential to him as a physician, which came so wonderfully to his assistance when he sat down to write his treatise. Certain it is that any one with insight and imagination, reading Luke's Gospel or the Acts, again and again feels himself pulled up by some story, some phrase, which indeed comes quite naturally into his narrative and is intended to be accepted as fact, but which nevertheless, when you ponder it as an incident or repeat it to yourself as a phrase, begins at once to become something more than appeared at the outset. From being a fact it begins to be some abiding principle thinly veiled.

Here, for example, we have a short story which it is a pure pleasure to read. With a few bold strokes we see the Apostle and the light of the fire on his face; round about him the absorbed eager faces of the barbarians. We hold our breath when we read about the viper. We can see those barbarians holding their breath as they watch to see Paul 'swell' and die; then their childish amazement and adoration when he knocked the viper into the fire, and went on talking as though nothing had happened. 'Howbeit he shook off the beast into the fire, and took no harm.' Does Luke mean us to see more in that than the crisis of some passing incident? Leaving out many wonderful things which he could have put into this short Book of the Acts, did he retain that particular story and give it that particular turn, in order to embody in a few sharp outlines an abiding fact and principle?

1. 'He shook off the viper and took no harm'; that, in a sense, is the claim of Christianity—that man may shake off the beast and, far from taking harm, for the first time begin to be man.

Before the last great war there was much discussion in higher walks of literature and in the less pedantic excursions of philosophy as to how man could be saved from the bad consequences which were the results of a slack and peaceful life here in the world. The thesis was that man is at his best when he is rowing against the stream, that, deprived of the necessity for struggle, he loses his virility and endurance; begins to live too exclusively by his wits; later, begins to become aware too pointedly of his body, to become an epicure in his food, more complicated and inventive and diabolical in his pleasures. And serious men shook their heads over his future, as to what would become of him unless he had to grapple once more with some task which would brace his soul through some new fine demand upon his muscles and his nerves. German philosophers went so far as to say that man simply could not dispense with the beast, that if he 'shook off the beast he would take harm.'

¶ Nietzsche spoke quite frankly of man as the 'blonde beast, hungry for prey,' and declared, 'Men are not equal, neither shall they become so. Life is a struggle to rise and to surmount itself. Divinely will we strive against each other. It has been said that a good cause justifies war; I say that a good war justifies any cause.'

Now there is something in all this which is perfectly true. A man is at his best when he is pulling against the stream. It is perfectly true that man goes to pieces in a long idleness and security. It is perfectly true that a man climbing a mountain does not grow dizzy so long as his face is towards the mountain-top and the sky beyond, be it the sun by day or by night the stars. The moment of danger for a climber is for the most part when, having attained an eminence, he pauses and presumes, and turns his face and looks about him, and looks downwards. It is, that is to say, true and always will be true of man that he must have an active and aggressive principle of life. The day that he ceases to get beyond himself is a day when he begins to shrink.

But surely the very idea which lies at the back of all talk of progress and of civilization is that that element of struggle and aspiration which is an integral faculty of man, which, when it is not exercised normally, begins like a secretion in the blood to poison the whole system—that that faculty must go on becoming finer and finer, not less keen, not less dominating, but finer. Indeed, that is the whole idea which underlies any sane way of considering life. We are here to grow finer. 'There is first that

which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual.' Having begun as a spiritual being, man is not going back to the flesh for perfection. If we have risen out of the beast, then we are not going back to the beast again. Any theory is surely condemned out of its own mouth which suggests to man that the goal of his ambition lies away behind him. That surely conflicts with the very design of the Creator, who planted our eyes looking forward —for use, that is to say, by beings whose function is to *proceed*.

¶ Browning's ultimate deliverance regarding man is, not that he is, nor that he is not, but that he is ever becoming. Man is ever at the point of contradiction between the actual and ideal, and moving from the latter to the former. Strife constitutes him. He is a war of elements, 'hurled from change to change unceasingly.' But rest is death, for it is the cessation of the spiritual activity, whose essence is acquirement, not mere possession, whether in knowledge or in goodness.

Man must pass from old to new,
From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
From what once seemed good, to what now proves best.

Were the movement to stop, and the contradiction between the actual and ideal reconciled, man would leave man's estate, and pass under 'angel's law.'

Indulging every instinct of the soul
There where law, life, joy, impulse are one thing!

But so long as he is man, he has

Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become.[1]

2. How are we to maintain within ourselves the fine ferment of aspiration and moral activity, the climbing, enduring, hardy attitude? That is a difficulty which will never really arise in men and women who believe in God. To believe in God—that of itself, when we ponder its implications, will set man an ever-ascending task; and the best men in the world will die, like that list of heroes in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, with the thing they have lived for all their lives still unachieved. Men who believe in God as Christ has made Him known to us will always have enough to do within themselves to bring harmony between the fine deepening demand of Jesus upon us all and our own poor and inadequate performance. There will be wild thrusts from our past life, belches upwards of an unholy steam from the central fire of our natural origins; there will be flashes of the ideal from the future, memories of the loved ones who have gone from us; high words, delicate insights—an army of the living God and an army of the Prince of the Power of the Air—these will always be about us making our life a good fight of faith. There will always be the dream of a Kingdom of God, a reign of justice, of kindness, of forgiveness in the world; there will always be unworthy things to hold in check or to transform, and worthy things to encourage and defend; there will always be a call for finer manners, holier laws; so that they shall simply be announcing their own moral blindness and stupidity who in this great world find themselves without a task.

3. How does this experience generally come home to us? It may be that we feel something in our own life, or something in a region over which we have influence or control—something about which we feel that it is wrong, unworthy, that it is interfering with our own better and wiser life, something which we feel to be low, as though it were still related to the beast! Whereupon God stands, as it were, a little apart from us, knowing that we know that something is wrong, and waiting to see whether we will act upon our own moral sense and proceed upon the appeal and guidance of our own uneasiness or fear or shame. We may not know how we are going to manage, how even we are going to live, if we do this thing or make this change which seems to be morally incumbent. But is it not just that which makes our action a worthy one, that it is rooted in faith?—that we only know that it is God who is calling us, and that the fine way to which we are being directed by the authoritative finger of our own aroused personality is for us at least the way and the truth and the life.

Higher still, and higher!
Courage! look not down to see
How high thy footing now may be,
Upward set thy face where He
Calls thee to come nigher,
Higher still, and higher.

[1] Sir Henry Jones, *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, 215.

It is the very promise of God, embodied in our own moral sense, a promise which is given in every page of Holy Scripture—that the power which is *calling* us is the power also which is *urging* us, that He who is putting the demand upon us is ready to supply the energy, and will undoubtedly open up the way. And still it is when the world observes such miracles repeated—men and women throwing off unworthy things, and rising into their true manhood, coming within sight of the austere and beautiful ideals of their womanhood—that those who are outside begin to feel that what the ancient Christian faith has always declared is true—that God is, and that He supports and accompanies every human soul which, shaking off the clinging low thing, will venture forth bravely upon the high suggestion.

The Value of Sympathy

Acts xxviii. 15.—'When the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.'

1. A CASUAL observer would have seen little in St Paul's circumstances to suggest either thankfulness or hope. He had just landed after a terrible voyage and a disastrous shipwreck, and now he was going a prisoner to his trial at Rome, bound with a chain and guarded by soldiers.

But *we* might say that his journey to Italy was one of the great triumphs of his life. Amid the terrors of a shipwreck he alone had not lost his confidence. When his comrades were distracted by fear, his courage enabled him to retain a sound judgment. He stood forth the one man of practical sagacity among the trembling crowd of those whose previous experience was of no further avail. When others were in despair, he was unmoved; when others were perplexed, he had a perfectly clear purpose to pursue. He saved his companions, and received the homage of their gratitude and admiration. Danger brought to Paul, as it does to every true man, a new revelation of himself, his character, his work in the world; it brought out his genuine qualities, his dependence on God, his consciousness of a Divine mission—a mission not to be exercised only in some chosen field of appointed usefulness, but bringing with it plain and homely duties to be discharged in unexpected places; a mission founded on a pervading sense of the power and goodness of God.

And after the shipwreck the testimony of God to Paul's mission showed itself in exceptional ways. His preservation from the viper's sting impressed the wild islanders with a belief in his divinity; his gift of healing was exercised so that he enlisted their gratitude and help on behalf of the crew. Again Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, was the man who took the command and stood out foremost. His power as a leader of men was wonderfully shown; he had dominated all around him, soldiers, sailors, rude countryfolk and cultivated colonists alike. A splendid promise was thus given him for the new task that lay before him. He might approach the great city of Rome with the feelings of an assured conqueror.

2. So we might think; but it would seem that Paul thought otherwise. He was not led away by the intoxication of feeling that he was the hero of the hour. He was not much moved by the bewildered and unintelligent admiration of the islanders, or by the honours and rewards offered by those whom he had healed. All this did not in itself further his great object. We do not know that any Church was founded in Melita; we do not know that any of the companions of his voyage were moved to turn to the Lord Jesus. Doubtless Paul was braced and strengthened by all that befell him on the way; doubtless he saw that the good hand of his God was with him, and felt encouraged. But smaller things than these were needed to cheer the human heart of the Apostle, and they in good time were given him; for the brethren in Rome, 'when they heard of us, came to meet us as far as The Market of Appius and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.' Not the knowledge that the winds and waves were ordered for his sake; not the exhibition of the power of his personality over others; not the consciousness of special gifts bestowed upon him; but the feeling that he had friends like-minded with himself, friends who understood him and loved him for his works' sake before they had seen his face—this it was that comforted him, so that 'he thanked God, and took courage.'

We have here an illustration of a great principle of the Divine economy. The supernatural, the extraordinary may awaken, arouse, direct,

and fix the attention; but it is the natural and the ordinary which cheers the heart and guides the conduct. Paul's sense of the overruling providence of God marked out for him the work that was to be done, but the sympathy of men like himself, and the sense of human companionship were necessary in his moment of depression to endow him with perfect courage, and aroused a more heartfelt gratitude to God than did even the wondrous preservation of his life from danger. What he had experienced at sea was merely the assurance that his bodily life was safe; what he experienced when the greetings of the Christian brotherhood fell upon his ear was the assurance that God had provided a further sphere for his labours. The shipwreck told him that the present, however stormy it might seem, was still his; the greetings of the little Christian band foretold that the future also was his.

3. Paul recognized at once this truth, which had to be taught to the great prophet of the Old Dispensation. When Elijah was disappointed, he sent up the despairing cry, 'I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.' He despaired because his trust was on the constant supernatural assistance of Jehovah. He stood proudly and resolutely on the Mount of Carmel, when no voice was lifted in his favour, because he was quite content to know that the Lord was with him. But when the manifestation of Divine power did not lead to immediate success he was helpless. In his despair he fled from human companionship and sympathy; but he was bidden to find in these the ordinary working of the Divine power, the constant revelation of the Divine purposes to the believing and attentive soul.

This virtue of sympathy, like many other virtues, has received a conventional meaning, and so has been degraded. It is often limited to great crises of individual lives. It is generally looked for and given on the occurrence of some loss, some disaster, which is open and obvious. Men forget the twofold bearing of the Apostle's exhortation to 'rejoice with them that do rejoice,' as well as to 'weep with them that weep.' Great as may be the solace of sympathy in the times of crushing misfortune, it acts then but as an alleviation of inevitable pain. In the more subtle crises of our apparently uneventful everyday life it is a controlling and directing influence.

¶ Robertson Nicoll, in a letter to Quiller-Couch, says: 'I think it is since I wrote you that I was over in Holland seeing our friend Maartens. He is building a large new house near Utrecht in about a hundred acres of ground. I am sorry to say that he is far from happy, though his wife has returned to him considerably better in health. I do not quite know how to understand his melancholy, but I attribute it largely to the fact that he has nobody to talk to on the things in which he is interested. I am sure that a certain amount of human intercourse is essential for health of mind and body, and the consequence of his isolation is that he takes morbid and jaundiced views of everything. He thinks, for example, that his friends in London would hardly speak to him because he is a pro-boer, and that this prevents his books being sold. He does not understand how small the unit is, and how little people trouble. . . . If he had two or three congenial friends to meet every other evening and to shake him up and talk, he would be kept right.[1]

'Be ye all like-minded, sympathetic,' says St Peter. Unanimity, like-mindedness must come first; and of this sympathy is the expression. We must first be like-minded; not of the same mind, still less of the same opinion. The Apostle does not bid us aim at bringing all men to our mind; he bids us recognize like-mindedness as actually existing between ourselves and all with whom we have to do. Is he not right in so bidding? Does not the sense of the common Fatherhood of God, the common Brotherhood of Christ, unite men by a bond which nothing else can forge? Is not the same God over all? Did not Christ die for all? Is not the end and aim of life the same for all men? Assuredly we are members one of another in a deeper sense than we can fathom; and the acknowledgment of this truth must be the beginning of the Christian practice. Nothing to him is common or unclean, for God has cleansed all things, and Christ's love has knit all men together. We readily profess this truth, but like-mindedness is the recognition of it, and genuine sympathy is its expression in our daily conduct.

4. It is sometimes objected to the Christian view of life that it is selfish, because it teaches every man to care for his individual salvation;

[1] T. H. Darlow, *William Robertson Nicoll*, 166.

that it is in some ways a bar to social progress, because it lays down that this life is not the ultimate goal of human effort; that its exhortations to contentment and resignation are hindrances to the inevitable struggle after social reorganization. But surely Christianity tells us that we are a band of brethren bound together on a common quest, each needing help, and each rendering it in turn.

We believe that Christianity promotes social progress in the most effective way, because it has no definite system of the outward organization of society, but acts upon the wills of men by urging those great principles which are the true bonds between man and man. It is concerned not with the form, but with the spirit. It pleads that, if men would realize their true position in this world, all questions of outward organization would settle themselves. How many movements, excellent in themselves, fail to influence those for whom they are designed, because they do not rest on like-mindedness, because they are not set forth in terms of sympathy. A man must speak, if he is to carry conviction, as an equal to equals; he must make his hearers feel that he is seeking their highest good, which is also his own; he must appeal to their inherent dignity as men, and must show them the unknown and unexpected capacities which are hidden in every human heart. His power and his usefulness will depend on his exercise of genuine sympathy.

¶ This truth is illustrated in a most remarkable way by the life of St Francis of Assisi, a simple man who had no great purpose in his acts, but only lived a life in accordance with the truth which he knew; and yet he wrought the greatest social regeneration which has been seen since Christianity first dawned upon the world. His life was one continued exhibition of sympathy, blessing alike him who gave and him who took. He saw Christ on earth in man and beast and flower; and his belief was to him a source of supreme pleasure. He knew, not so much the doctrine, as the Person, of Christ, and spoke only of Christ's love. He opposed no man, he contradicted nothing, he denounced nothing. Yet that life of his composed differences, dispelled errors, and breathed a new spirit into the world.

The great Apostle thanked God and took courage when he was cheered by the sense of companionship in his aims, his aspirations, and his life. We all need the same heartening; in rendering it one to another we are fulfilling one of the highest duties to which God has called us. And we shall find that sympathy with the trials of others is one of the surest means of alleviating any trials of our own, and it is one of the truest tests of our union with Christ and of our receiving out of His fullness.

¶ In one of my dreariest days—I was in London on business—I sat next to an old friend, generally a very lively, brisk and cheerful man, who appeared to me strangely silent and depressed. I led him on to talk freely, and he told me a long tale of anxieties and cares; his health was unsatisfactory, his plans promised ill. In trying to paint a brighter picture, to reassure and encourage him, I not only forgot my own troubles, but put some hope into him.

We had met, two tired and dispirited men; we went away cheered and encouraged, aware that we were not each of us the only sufferer in the world, and that there were possibilities still ahead of us all, nay, in our grip, if we only were not blind and forgetful.[1]

As we meet and touch each day
The many travellers on our way,
Let every such brief contact be
A glorious helpful ministry;
The contact of the soil and seed,
Each giving to the other's need,
Each helping on the other's best,
And blessing each as well as blest.

Feeling towards Unity

Acts xxviii. 15.—'He thanked God, and took courage.'

St Paul was on his way to the capital of the world. He had arrived at a place about a hundred miles inland from the coast. It may well be that he was wearied by his journey. It may be that he was anxious as he thought of the days that were before him. But what we do know is that he found a delightful surprise awaiting him. The Christians of Rome had heard that he was coming, and they set out to give him a welcome. They came evidently in two companies, for we read that one of those bodies arrived ten miles ahead of the other. And when he saw them all, Paul rejoiced and

[1] A. C. Benson, *The Altar Fire*, 140.

took heart, or, to use the words of Luke, 'he thanked God, and took courage.'

What were the reasons for his rejoicing, over and above the natural feeling of a man who after a long and difficult journey finds himself welcomed by friends? We believe they were two: one of them a reason which he held in common with every Christian of the time; another a reason which was especially his own.

1. Paul gathered encouragement, as every other Christian in those days would have done, in regard to the tremendous business in which the Church of Christ was engaged. We know well how those early Christians had seen their place and their duty. They were men who had been sent by their Master with a commission to prepare the world for the Kingdom of God. He had said to them, 'Go into all the world, and preach the gospel, and make disciples'—not 'out of every nation,' but 'make disciples of all the nations.' And they took His command literally. They believed it was their function, their privilege, their responsibility, to proclaim the ascended Christ, and to claim for Him the whole of human life. His will was to be done until the kingdoms of this world became the kingdoms of God and of Christ.

When we consider the earliest chapters of that earliest Church history, the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, we cannot fail to be struck by one quality of those earliest believers—their amazing audacity. They were few in number, and they had none of the ordinary sources of strength, social or political, at their command. The little company in the Upper Room at the start of the life of the Church consisted of one hundred and twenty persons—one hundred and twenty were charged with the command to revolutionize a world which consisted of one hundred and twenty millions, one to a million. And yet they did not hesitate, and it never occurred to them to flinch. They went straight ahead. With uplifted faces, they went with their commission, they delivered their message, they called men to faith and obedience, they spoke in the name of One to whom all authority in heaven and on earth was given, and they believed that His word, spoken by them, would be found to be the word of power. It was splendid audacity, and Paul was the bravest of them all. He was a leader, head and shoulders above the rest, and he was on his way to the very centre of the imperial system. He was full of great thoughts, full of great designs. He was to call Rome itself to hear the message of Jesus Christ. And we can well understand that in these companies of Roman Christians he would see a token and a pledge of the great things which were to follow. Surely, then, it was natural that he should rejoice, and that he should thank God for what he saw, and take courage for what was to come.

2. Paul gathered encouragement from what he saw, because he saw in it a prospect of the fulfilment of a condition indispensable to the progress of the Kingdom of God. To him it had been given, in a measure quite his own, to understand that there was a condition which must be fulfilled—the condition of unity within the Christian Church. Paul knew that nothing could be done unless a united front could be shown. And consequently for years he had worked and prayed and striven to attain this end. It had become the passion of his life. He longed for it; he suffered for it. At that moment, he was an ambassador in chains in the cause of Christian unity. And there before him was an omen and a token and a pledge of the very thing he longed and prayed for and hoped to see. It may be reasonably conjectured that those two companies consisted of the two groups, Jewish and Gentile, into which the Roman Church was divided. There was between them a barrier of separation. There were prejudices and customs and rivalries and disagreements that would have made it very natural to them to travel apart, each in his own group. And there were those companies, one ten miles behind the other, one in front, and one following afar. There they were, and they had met round Paul as the centre. That meeting must have meant very much to him, and out of that fact he may well have gathered strength, encouragement, and reason for thanksgiving, seeing them thus together, the two streams uniting. He may well have thanked God as he did and taken good courage.

3. It is a long time since the Apostle's day, but the work and the struggle and the witness of the Church have gone on ever since. And to-day we have, without doubt, things that disappoint, that discourage, but it is equally

true that we have causes for hope and joy. And if Paul were among us with his quick eye, we may venture to believe that he would see the very things which called forth the gladness of his soul that day when he met these companies on his road to the metropolis. Certainly he would see among Christians everywhere a growing sense of the importance of the Kingdom of God, and of the relation of the Church to the Kingdom of God. We no longer find it possible to project the Kingdom of God, to postpone the Kingdom of God, to believe that it is only to come in a future world.

¶ We have shifted the Kingdom of God to another sphere—to heaven, where it will be innocuous as far as this world and its present order are concerned. The Pharisees sat at meat with Jesus. He watched them choose out the chief seats, and He astounded them when He gave a call to these religious leaders to forget about chief seats, to step down from religious pedestals, to cease giving complimentary dinners that could be returned, but to throw themselves into the service of the poor, and to lose themselves. This was Jesus' great call to the Pharisees to throw in their lot with the Kingdom by self-renunciation for the sake of others. There was a tense moment as the reality of His words fell upon their hearts. They were meeting the supreme call. There was an embarrassing silence. A polite gentleman who hated these upsetting things at dinner parties tried to smooth things over by the pious interjection: 'Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God.' He met the challenge with this commonplace. The call to share bread now was met with the exclamation of what joy it will be to eat bread in the Kingdom hereafter. This gentleman is with us still! He takes the edge off Christ's challenge, he explains away its rugged meanings, he tones it down to suit things as they are. He is the greatest danger that the gospel has to-day.[1]

We have learned, too, that it was a mistake to suppose that the Church is the same thing as the Kingdom of God. The Church is the means; the Kingdom is the end. It is the vast objective before us. That thought as it spreads—and it is spreading—will revolutionize Church life and will bring back to us the sense of service and of enterprise. We shall see wonderful things when we all believe that we are indeed enrolled under a banner to fight for our Master against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

¶ I am not a Socialist. In fact, I oppose, and in a sense dread it. But it will spread and overcome, unless we show the nobler, truer faith of Christ's gospel and of the Lord's Prayer, that the kingdom of God, *i.e.* the kingdom of righteousness, of love, of harmony, of brotherhood, will come into the world, and that it is the mission of the Church, as it is her prayer, to establish it in the world.[1]

And together with that thought there is coming to us another, a deepening conviction that if the Church is to be successful in winning the world to the allegiance of Christ, there must be unity in the Church. Not for generations past has this feeling been so strong as it is to-day. We have been talking about it for long, we have been praying about it for long, and now we have the sense that the moment has arrived when we must prepare for action.

¶ We fail to impress the world because the world says to us, 'You are unable to come together and look at the big things: you lay stress on secondary matters. Your minds are full of the petty things which divide you, and you have not the largeness of mind to look steadily at the great things which should be everything to you. If you had the mind to see what is really big these things which separate you would seem trivial.' Can the Churches afford to despise an indictment like that?

There is another, and a practical, consideration. To-day the Church has to meet enemies that are more powerful than ever before. Not intellectual enemies, but forces that wish to nullify her witness and undermine her influence, and there is a need, and a call, for a fresh organization of her resources to meet the modern situation and the modern enemy.

It is the old question of unity of command. It was unity of command that won the War for us. The victory came when all forces were brought together and were thrown where they were needed. Is not that the precise situation in the religious world to-day? How can we win the greater war when we are all fighting just as we like on a broad front with no cohesion and no unity of organized plan? [2]

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *Christ at the Round Table*, 95.

[1] *John Brown Paton*, 445.
[2] *Expository Times*, xxxvi. 196.

We feel that something must be done, and the sign that the feeling is genuine and sincere is the persuasion that if there is to be unity it must begin with those who are nearest to one another. Things must take place which cannot easily be effected. There must be a willingness, and a generous willingness, and there must be humility, a preparedness to admit that we have all been wrong. It is a difficult business, it is a delicate affair. Indiscreet action may hinder rather than help. Premature steps may be found to lead nowhere. We need great wisdom, and we need great patience and, more than either, the gift of charity. It will not be the work of a moment. We must not hurry, but we must not procrastinate. The opportunity is ripe, but the opportunity may pass. Let us use our whole influence to help this movement and guide it to a right issue.

Gather us in, Thou Love that fillest all,
Gather our rival faiths within Thy fold,
Rend each man's temple veil and bid it fall
That we may know that Thou hast been of old;
Gather us in.

Gather us in: we worship only Thee;
In varied names we stretch a common hand;
In diverse forms a common soul we see;
In many ships we seek one spirit-land;
Gather us in.

Each sees one colour of Thy rainbow-light,
Each looks upon one tint and calls it heaven;
Thou art the fullness of our partial sight;
We are not perfect till we find the seven;
Gather us in.[1]

The Importance of Belief

Acts xxviii. 24.—'And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.'

Did it matter which they did? Is right belief an indispensable condition of human happiness and well-being? Does it seriously matter what a man believes?

There is no ambiguity about the Christian teaching on this subject, which is that right belief sets a man in harmony with the truth of things, and so qualifies him generally for thinking right, acting right, and becoming what he ought to be. In the present day, however, there is a noticeable tendency to depreciate the importance of definite religious beliefs. Creeds are considered superfluities. The religious atmosphere is thick with mist. 'He rather fancied'—it has been said of an eminent man of letters—'he rather fancied he believed in some sort of a something'; and the phrase seems exactly to hit off the faith of multitudes who are apparently content to exist perpetually in a state of believing nothing in particular. Whatever reasons may be assigned for it, it is certainly the fact that even among professing Christians there is a great and increasing laxity about the whole question of belief. How often do we hear it said, 'Does it really so greatly signify what a man believes? If we live a moral life and follow Christ's practical precepts to the utmost of our ability, who cares about our opinions?' The position is tersely summed up in the often-quoted lines of Pope:

For modes of grace let graceless zealots fight;
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right!

So the poet cries—assuming that a man's life can be in the right although his creed is in the wrong. But can it? Does not experience prove the contrary? Consider how it is in the ordinary affairs of life. Is it not plain that conviction and conduct are in intimate relationship, so that, if we hold a belief that is wrong, at least about facts which profoundly concern us, our conduct can hardly fail to be injuriously affected by it? Suppose, for instance, that I believe that I am dying of an incurable malady, or that the friend whom I trusted is false, or that the business in which I have invested all my capital is on the point of crash, is it conceivable that my conduct would be uninfluenced by such beliefs? Could I go on acting just the same as if I did not believe these things? And suppose that the beliefs are wrong; must they not put us on a wrong tack, betray us into wrong performance, and impart an element of wrongness into our whole behaviour? Undoubtedly they must. You may remember how Tennyson puts it:

O purblind race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true.

[1] George Matheson.

Now apply this principle to religion. If it matters what we believe about the secular details of life, much more seriously must it matter what we believe about the great, everlasting, ultimate, vitally important realities. And it is emphatically necessary that we should rightly adjust ourselves to these realities. But how can we possibly do so, unless we first apprehend correctly what these realities actually are? We must first see and know and recognize and appreciate and understand. So long as we dare to trifle with these tremendous facts and forces which constitute the universe and exert so commanding an influence on the course of human life, so long as we have no beliefs about them or wrong beliefs about them, we cannot attain peace, we cannot come to our perfection, we cannot 'be saved.'

1. *Belief in God.*—Take an example. 'I believe in God.' Will anyone affirm that it is a matter of little moment whether or not we believe in God? Would it make no difference to us if we believed that God did not exist? That certainly is not the experience of thoughtful and earnest men, who, after prolonged investigations and deep searchings of heart, have found themselves constrained to abandon belief in God. How mournful is the voice with which W. K. Clifford proclaimed, 'We have felt with utter loneliness that the Great Companion is dead!' How bitter the tone of the famous passage in which Nietzsche laments the loss of a God in whom he can trust and to whom he can pray, ending up with the passionate cry, 'Man, of thy self-denial, wilt thou deny thyself all this? Whence wilt thou gain the strength?' Indeed to a serious man it cannot but radically change the aspect of the world and of human life, when he looks upward and beholds, no longer God enthroned in heaven, but only a gaping void of infinite Nothingness. Or, even if the existence of God be granted, can we imagine that it is immaterial in what manner we conceive of God? Shall we regard Him as Fatherly Providence, ceaselessly operating in His universe, or as the Great Absentee who never does anything for His creatures? Is it not obviously important that we should give the right answers to these questions? Once let a man be fully possessed by faith in God's ruling and working, he will find in that conviction illumination for his darkness, consolation in his sorrow, and a stimulus to moral energy that nothing on earth can equal. 'Thereafter,' writes one of the most popular authors of our day—'thereafter one goes about the world like one who was lonely and has found a lover, like one who was perplexed and has found a solution. One is assured that there is a Power that fights with us against the confusion and evil within us and without. There comes into the heart an essential and enduring happiness and courage.'

> One adequate support
> For the calamities of mortal life
> Exists—one only; an assured belief
> That the procession of our fate, howe'er
> Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
> Of infinite benevolence and power;
> Whose everlasting purposes embrace
> All accidents, converting them to good.[1]

2. *Belief in Redemption.*—Take another illustration. 'I believe in redemption, in the washing away of sin, in spiritual regeneration.' Does it make no difference whether we hold this faith or not? Does it not make all the difference? We cannot get rid of that distressing sense of wrongness which is called the consciousness of sin. Nor can we hide from ourselves the fact that we cannot, by our unaided strength, gain the victory over sin. The odds against us are far too many. The moral counsels of the sages do not help us in this matter. In vain does Plato teach us how to restrain the passions, and Aristotle how to purge them, and the Stoics how to extinguish them. We remain bond-slaves still. Now if we stop short at this point—if we only believe in the reality of sin and in the incompetence of human nature to gain the victory over it—what is left for us but blank despair? There is no remedy for our wrongness. Wrong we have been, and wrong we are, and wrong we shall doubtless continue to be to the end of the chapter; and we feel that we may as well accept the facts, give up for evermore our impossible ideals, and readjust our ethical standards into closer accord with our irremovable infirmities. But suppose now that we further believe in a superhuman Power of Grace that can lift us up out of our sin. Suppose that we believe in a Power that can not only make us good, but keep us good—that can cleanse the

[1] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, bk. iv.

strings of desire, and impart fresh vigour to our will, and reconstitute our broken nature. Does this conviction make no difference? Is it nothing to us who have languished in the prison-house of sin to be assured that we have a Deliverer? Is it not, on the contrary, precisely this faith that is needed to save us from utter pessimism and bring back confidence to the heart? 'I believe in redemption.' Here is the secret of spiritual triumphs. I believe in justification, in sanctification, in regeneration. I believe in the restoring, rehabilitating Force that pours itself out to me from the Cross—

I believe in Love renewing
All that sin hath swept away,
Leaven-like its work pursuing
Night by night and day by day:
In the power of its remoulding,
In the grace of its reprieve,
In the glory of beholding
Its perfection—I believe.

3. *Belief in a Future Life.*—Or take just one other example. 'I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.' Does it matter whether we believe in a future life or not? Imagine that we have answered it in the negative—what then? Why, we look forward into the future, and name a day not so very distant, and are sure that when that day comes we shall have vanished out of existence. Simply and literally we shall be nothing. Must not so ghastly a belief cast a black shadow over everything? Must it not rob us of one of the most powerful incentives to work? Must it not take away the mightiest stimulus to moral effort? Must it not brand our whole human life as an unintelligible enigma? As for happiness, what solid and enduring happiness can we find, while we believe that even our gladdest joy is but a transient ray of light that flickers momentarily athwart the dismal passage to the tomb? It was Huxley himself who wrote in a letter to John Morley: 'It flashes across me at all sorts of times with a sort of horror that in 1900 I shall probably know no more of what is going on than I did in 1800. I would sooner be in hell a great deal—at any rate (he adds whimsically) in one of the upper circles, where the climate and company are not too trying.' Yes, in spite of the contention, which is so fashionable nowadays, that it is possible to find a meaning and a value in our present life without recourse to the hypothesis of the life to come, it is still demonstrably true that the very foundations of life are shaken when we relinquish the expectation of a sorrowless Eternity.

¶ Bertrand Russell, in *The Religion of the Free Man*, writes: 'Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race that slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way. For man, condemned to-day to lose his dearest, to-morrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day; disdaining the coward terrors of the slave of Fate to worship at the shrines that his own hands have built; undismayed by the empire of chance to preserve a mind free from the wanton tyranny that rules his outward life, proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate for a moment his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned, despite the trampling march of unconscious Power.'

As Huxley said in his famous Rectorial Address to the University of Aberdeen, 'matters of belief and speculation are of absolutely infinite practical importance.' For since our belief determines our attitude towards the realities of the universe, it must follow with strict inevitableness that we cannot believe wrongly without in some way paying the penalty. If we mistake the facts of the natural world and adopt a wrong attitude towards them, we shall unquestionably suffer for it. And if we mistake the facts of the spiritual world and adopt a wrong attitude towards them, we shall unquestionably suffer for it. Our duty, then, is, first to find out what is true, and then to hold that truth with unwavering fidelity. Investigation comes first. We must settle, to begin with, what the facts of religion are. There should be the fullest, most free and most fearless enquiry. For religion bids us serve God with all our mind, and while it encourages us to believe, it would have us take every precaution to ensure that our beliefs be right. But when we have found out, so far as we are able, what the truths of religion really are, when we have meditated and are reasonably persuaded,

then let there be no trifling with these supremely momentous convictions. Whatsoever we believe, let us at least believe it thoroughly, and act on it courageously and consistently. In no other way can we make progress. For, while it is expedient to prove all things, it is essential that we should hold fast that which is good.

On what we believe depends the lifting or lowering of conduct, the greatening or lessening of character, the making or marring of happiness, the saving or losing of the soul.

Unresponsive to Religion

Acts xxviii. 27.—'The heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.'

This quotation from the sixth chapter of Isaiah appears no fewer than five times in the New Testament. In every case it is the complaint of a messenger of God that his message is not received. We are all familiar with Isaiah's impressive description of the circumstances under which he received his call to preach: 'In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.' This vision produces in the beholder a sense of his own sinfulness and unworthiness—'I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.' Then follows the symbolic purification with the live coal taken off the altar. Then from the throne proceeds the interrogation, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Isaiah at once replies, 'Here am I; send me.' Forthwith he was told to go and speak the truth of God to a people who would refuse to hear. The language of the commission is that of rhetorical hyperbole: 'Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.'

The meaning of this saying is plain enough. It was a time in which trouble and disaster were impending. People were frivolous, luxurious, selfish, pleasure-loving. Their good old king lay dead, and wise and earnest minds were filled with foreboding as to the evils which were likely to follow under the new régime. It was brooding over this which brought Isaiah to the conviction that he was Divinely chosen to recall his countrymen to a more spiritual mode of life. The prophet seems to have expected from the first that people would be indisposed to hear. The mood of the time was against him. Those to whom his appeal was directed were too sunken in materialism to be willing to respond to it. For a time this did indeed prove to be the case, for it was not until King Hezekiah ascended the throne, and Jerusalem was in the greatest danger from a foreign foe, that the word of God obtained access to the national consciousness and the springs of the national life were cleansed.

Turn now to the New Testament. It seems a remarkable thing that Jesus should use the words of Isaiah as expressing His own experience. He had no lack of a hearing, surely. We read that crowds followed Him everywhere—at least for a time. There was one moment in particular when they would have taken Him by force to make Him a king had He not withdrawn into solitude. We are told that the common people heard Him gladly. How then are we to understand His statement that they did not really hear at all? Well, it was then very much as it is now; the many were restless and unhappy, but it was only the few who were deeply in earnest about spiritual things. Crowds came to Jesus, because they were attracted by the spiritual power of His personality, but they could not continue to live on His level, nor were they prepared to comply with His drastic demand for self-surrender as an antecedent condition to entering upon the higher life He had come to reveal to them.

1. *The Decline of Religion and its Causes.*—We cannot ignore the fact that throughout the world just now there is, or seems to be, a decline in religious susceptibility, a decay of religious desire. Why is it that so large a proportion of the people of this country, and practically every other civilized country, seems to have lost that sense of the eternal which we usually associate with religious life? That is, perhaps, how we should put it, for in some ways what deserves to be called spiritual life is as strong as it ever was, if not stronger. We are more humane

than our immediate forbears; we have a keener sense of social justice; we are developing a social conscience; we have considerable faith in the better future of mankind, and so on. But the assurance of the eternal is certainly absent from our common consciousness, though we find it here and there in individuals. Society as a whole has not got it, and, what is more, it feels itself able to get on quite well without it. Men live in the present, the material, the mundane. They will not listen to anything that places stress upon the unseen, the purely spiritual. Why is this so?

(1) Partly it is due to *the craving for pleasure.* Most people's lives are so toilsome, so monotonous, and their tasks so uninspiring that through sheer reaction they seek for whatever distractions they can find. People who are cooped up in factories and offices for the greater part of their waking hours are sure to try to secure the utmost relaxation for their tired systems when they can. Hence the mad rush for pleasure, change, excitement, novelty. The football field and the dance hall are more attractive to such people than gratifications of a more elevated kind. These delights minister to overworked and jaded faculties, the pressure upon which has necessitated the neglect of other and higher faculties of man's complex nature. Before we make haste to condemn the widespread craving for crude modes of enjoyment, let us not forget what has principally caused it.

(2) A further cause of the present comparative atrophy of spiritual desire is a concomitant of the one just mentioned; it is *our utilitarian habit of mind.* There is no fault to be found with this in itself; it had to come and the world is all the richer for knowing more about its own resources. But let us understand what we are doing. We are making minds of a certain type, minds which think in terms of balance-sheets, joint-stock business enterprises, economic legislation, new markets, income-tax, battleships, compulsory State insurance, and the like. It is impossible to avoid thinking about these things; but when they tend to absorb most of our attention, as they certainly do, the result is that they produce a certain quality of mind which feels little susceptibility towards the spiritual. Men are what their pursuits make them, and our pursuits to-day are tending to force us into a merely utilitarian groove of thought and feeling, and to disincline us to listen to appeals which relate to any other kind of life.

(3) There are other reasons why the religious motive does not operate so strongly as it used to do. Briefly, we may class them under such headings as *chronic poverty* and the degradation which follows in its train, unfitting men and women for anything higher than a brute existence; *luxury*, which is a similar evil; *the inability of the Church to address herself to the needs of the time*, owing to the hampering effect of antiquated creeds, and so on. But none of these, taken singly, is so responsible for the prevailing indifference to religion as the fact that the kind of mind our daily habits, tasks, and toils are making is a mind that cannot readily respond to the call of the unseen. We have ransacked Nature, torn her treasures from her, made her minister to our delight, but perhaps it is at the cost of spiritual vision.

¶ A Roman Catholic writer, Christopher Dawson, in *God and the Supernatural*, writes, 'The modern indifferentism is due, not so much to any philosophic theory as to the material triumphs of modern civilization and man's conquest of Nature; this has reacted upon man himself. The realm of mystery, before which he feels himself humble and weak, has withdrawn its frontiers; he can know his world now without falling back, or so he thinks, upon revelation. He can live his life without feeling his utter dependence upon supernatural powers.' And he adds, 'Yet if man so limits himself to a satisfied animal existence, and asks from life only what such an existence can give, the higher values of life at once disappear. It is from this very element of the eternal and unlimited which the materialist in practice seeks to deny that the true progress of the human race has sprung.'

The time is near at hand for all of us when we must forsake these external interests in obedience to the command of death and go elsewhere. Then, if all our lives we have been rushing hard after one kind of good, how are we going to adjust ourselves to another? What shall we do in a world where money means nothing, where fashion means nothing, where material possessions are unobtainable? If our habit of mind has been moulded by such considerations as these, how poor we shall be when we are withdrawn from them! 'So is he that

layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.'

2. *The Remedy.*—What is wanted at the present day is a reawakening of desire for and susceptibility to the eternal. To some extent it is already here, but it must become more intense, and the Holy Ghost must fall upon us with new life and power. We want a Divine illlumination of our common consciousness, a deeper awareness of sacred meanings in our common life.

O God of mountains, stars and boundless spaces,
O God of freedom and of joyous hearts,
When Thy face looketh forth from all men's faces
There will be room enough in crowded marts.
Brood Thou around me, and the noise is o'er,
The universe Thy closet with shut door.

That spiritual illumination will come if only we can lift our thoughts towards it, and pray God to grant it. This is not the first time in the history of the world that it has been sorely needed; the stage we are passing through just now is not new. Again and again Christendom has passed through a similar phase or mood. How gross was the twelfth century before Bernard arose! How secular was the early thirteenth before the friars came! It was an England in which infidelity was cynically avowed, even by persons who held high ecclesiastical office, when Wesley and Whitfield began their mission. Though we are not so sunken to-day, we sadly need the restoration of our spiritual perspective. But the day will come when it will be just as impossible to deny the immortality of the soul as it is now impossible to deny that the world is round. The day will come when we shall see that the only value of the material is that it is the sacrament of the spiritual, a temporal symbol of an eternal good. And when that day comes we shall enthrone Christ as Lord of the commonwealth of nations as well as Master and Saviour of every individual human being who has discovered the nothingness of life without God.

The Prison-Ministry of St Paul

Acts xxviii. 30, 31.—'And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.'

We have here our last certain glimpse of the Apostle Paul. His ambition had long been to visit Rome. Time after time he was on the point of starting for the mother-city, and time after time he was prevented. His purpose was often thwarted, but never for a moment abandoned. Rome lay always on the far horizon of his mind. His passionate yearning was deeper than the mere patriotic sentiment of a Roman citizen. It was justified by his sure sense of the supreme strategic importance of the metropolis, the gathering-place of all nations. He probably realized that his own greatest work must be accomplished there. At any rate he knew that the decisive blow to paganism had to be struck at the world's great centre. Till he came to Rome he could never fully appreciate the strength of the dominion of the Cæsars, or measure against it all the power of Christ. For the world-city he had a world-gospel.[1]

At length his heart's desire was realized. It is true that he did not come to Rome, as he had hoped, with full freedom of action. He was sent thither as 'an ambassador in bonds.' Yet his ministry in Rome was supremely effective. Despite all obstacles, the message which he carried found a welcome in most unexpected quarters. The Word of God could not be bound, and but for his captivity and chain the Apostle would not, humanly speaking, have carried out so far-reaching a ministry. The influence of this prison-ministry made itself felt in many directions. It moved upwards and touched the lives of men and women in the highest circles of society in Rome. It penetrated to the lowest deeps of humanity and regenerated the outcast. It spread, and is still spreading, in ever-widening circles to far distant lands. By the letters which he dictated in his Roman prison the Apostle has left an enduring memorial, a pattern of Christian faith to shape the life of the Church in all ages.

[1] James Strachan.

1. Let us begin with the Apostle's most constant companion. This was not Luke but the 'soldier that kept him.'

On reaching Rome, Julius' first care was to march to his headquarters—the Camp of the Peregrini on the Caelian Hill—and there hand over the prisoners to his official superior, the Captain of the Camp. Paul, however, doubtless on the ground of the report of Festus and the friendly intervention of the centurion, Julius, was accorded a welcome privilege. He was allowed to hire a house or a lodging in the city, and live there at his own convenience under the surveillance of a soldier who was responsible for his presence when required. A light chain fastened Paul's wrist to that of the soldier. No hindrance was offered to his inviting friends into his house, or to his preaching to all who came to see him; but he was not allowed to go out freely. One by one these rough Roman soldiers would be coupled by a chain to the prisoner, and would never be absent from his presence and influence day or night.

It is clear that this would give the Apostle a unique opportunity for personal influence, which we may be sure could not be in vain. By his patience as well as by his words Paul recommended the gospel which he preached. He revealed to those men, who daily came in contact with him, a spirit deeper than their own pagan bravery. His gentleness, his silence, shone like a gleam of Christ Himself upon the hearts of those heathen men. Even when no word was spoken, the soldiers would always be reading 'a living epistle,' for 'without the word' men are 'won by the behaviour,' the manner of life, of those with whom they associate.

¶ In the museum at Rome there is to be seen to this day a square of plaster cut from the wall of a barrack-room in the Palace of the Cæsars on which is scratched a human figure with an ass's head, nailed to a cross, with a man kneeling before it, obviously intended to insult and gibe at some Christian soldier convert, and underneath is written, 'Anexamenos worships his God.' Anexamenos was one of the Prætorian Guard converted by Paul. He was a Christian soldier, the forerunner of Havelock and his saints, of Hedly Vicars, and Gordon, and the long line of heroes who have fought for their country's honour, while they held the secret of Jesus in their hearts.[1]

[1] Basil Wilberforce, *The Purpose of God*, 23.

The salutation, in the Epistle to the Philippians, from 'the saints in Cæsar's household,' still further extends this singular range of influence, and confirms the belief that, so far from hindering the course of the gospel, the restraints on the Apostle's liberty brought him into contact with those whom he could otherwise have hardly hoped to evangelize. The very chain which Roman discipline riveted on the prisoner's arm secured to his side a hearer who would tell the story of patient suffering for Christ among those who, the next day, might be in attendance on Nero himself, and would certainly be the friends and companions of some among that motley company which formed the 'family of Cæsar.'

2. Let us look now at a different class, and follow the influence of the Apostle into the lowest haunts of the city.

Far away in the Roman province of Asia, at a town upon the Lycus, a tributary of the river Meander, there lived a Christian convert who owed his conversion to St Paul. This man had a disreputable and dishonest slave, who, having cheated his master, ran away, and, like many others of his kind, made his way to that sink of the world's offscourings—Rome. We can well picture the career of such a man in such a city, where the ranks of 'the submerged' were being daily recruited from the seething mass of vice and misery which constantly drained into its lowest dens. He would soon spend his stolen treasure, and then nothing would be left but a course of vice and villainy.

By what steps this poor waif and stray came to be rescued from the inevitable outcome of his past life we cannot tell, but of the marvellous result we are quite sure. He was lost to his old life only that he might be found for better things. The influence of the captive missionary somehow or other penetrated to the lowest classes that haunted the slums of the great capital, and the disgraced felon became a disciple of Jesus Christ, the outcast a child, the dishonest servant a 'brother beloved.'

The story of Philemon and Onesimus is one of the most pathetic and most significant in Bible story. It is the story of a great conversion, and of one of the triumphs of God's grace. It throws a cheering radiance upon the dark prison-room, and it helps us to fill in with absolute certainty another detail in Luke's

outline. Once more we recognize how unfettered were the hands that wore that coupling-chain. Through the soldier that kept him Paul was preaching in the imperial barrack-rooms, and in Cæsar's household; through the friends whom he received in his hired dwelling the gospel of frank forgiveness was sounding in other directions, and its message was reaching even to the very dregs of the criminal classes in Rome.[1]

3. There is one other direction in which Paul's imprisonment blessed the Church, and through it blessed mankind at large, far more than his liberty and his external activity could have done. Is it not a contradiction in terms to say that the imprisonment of this courageous leader, this eloquent preacher, this keen, subtle debater should have been more profitable to the Church than the exercise of his external freedom and liberty, when all these dormant powers would have found ample scope for their manifestation? And yet if Christ had not laid His arresting hand upon the active, external labour in which Paul had been absorbed, if he had not been cast into the Roman prison-house, the Church of all future time would have been deprived of those masterly expositions of Christian truth which she now enjoys in the various Epistles of the Captivity.

The Epistle to the Philippians, with all its mellow maturity of spiritual fruits, was born in bondage. And Colossians, with its glorious proclamation of the sole headship and mediatorship of Jesus Christ, was born in the same gloomy servitude. And what rare treasures there are in these and other letters, which we might never have known had the inspired writer always been free! 'In my distress thou hast enlarged me.' The experience of the Psalmist was surely the experience of the Apostle, and we enjoy the splendid fruit of his enlargement. Paul entered Rome in bonds, but in his bondage he sent forth letters which have enriched the world with infinite blessedness.

¶ In a letter from Uganda during the days of fierce persecutions in which that Church was cradled, there occurs the following phrase—'*Times of persecution are busy printing times.*' The undaunted men who planted the standard of the Cross in Uganda had already reduced the language to writing, and translated portions of Scripture, with prayers and hymns, for the use of the Baganda. And during those dark days, when active and aggressive work was unwise, if not impossible, they plied the printing-press and issued from it the first literature of that wonderful race, which Stanley found them studying when he visited them on one of his journeys.

¶ John Bunyan's imprisonment liberated his mind, and gave us *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Holy War*, and *Grace Abounding*. All down the years he has been speaking for Christ, and will continue to do so until the Lord comes. But for the imprisonment in Bedford Gaol, John Bunyan would have been too busy to have written *The Pilgrim's Progress* as well as he did; I think it would have shown some marks of haste. He would have been far too busy to have written *The Holy War*, better in some respects than *The Pilgrim's Progress*; too busy to write *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. So that the bonds at Bedford Gaol liberated John Bunyan and gave him to the world.[1]

What a life Paul would have lived had he been free to do whatever he pleased, and to go wherever he liked. It is notorious that when a man is made a bishop his days become so crowded that it is a rare thing for him to produce his greatest books! And who knows but that if this great Apostle had had more temporary freedom we might have had less permanent fruit. Sometimes the Lord permits our seclusion in order that we may do a larger work. His merciful sight has long range, and that is why our immediate circumstances are often so contradictory to our aspiration and prayer. The Lord looks beyond the temporary bondage to the ultimate freedom.[2]

The Kingdom of God

Acts xxviii. 31.—'Preaching the kingdom of God.'

St Paul tells us that he spent the two years in his Roman prison-house preaching 'the kingdom of God'—words so constantly on the lips of his Master. The gospel of Jesus is concerned with a Kingdom. The whole record of His life and teaching might be written under the title, 'The Gospel of the Kingdom.' Thus,

[1] T. W. Drury, *The Prison-Ministry of St Paul*, 23.

[1] A. C. Dixon, *Through Night to Morning*, 233.
[2] J. H. Jowett, *Life in the Heights*, 11.

for example, St Matthew tells us that 'Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom.' Parable after parable opens with the formula 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto . . .,' or, 'So is the kingdom of God as if . . .,' or, 'How shall we liken the kingdom of God?' When Christ sent forth the Twelve, this was His command, 'Go . . . and as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' And in the great Forty Days, before He was received up, it was still of 'the things concerning the kingdom of God' that He spake unto His disciples. Every time a little child is baptized we call to mind His words, 'For of such is the kingdom of God.' Every time we repeat the prayer He taught His disciples to pray we say, 'Thy kingdom come.'[1]

Not only is everything that Jesus said related to this subject, but everything that He did as well. He called round Him a band of disciples, He taught them so that they might teach others, He formed them into the nucleus of a great Church—why? In order that He might separate them from the world at large? So that He might gather them into a little circle of privileged souls sure of their own salvation? There is no trace of any such idea in the teaching of Jesus. Jesus never called a human soul into intimacy with Himself without the purpose of sending that soul out as far as He Himself went. And so the little company were to be the pioneers of a kingdom whose message they were to carry everywhere, and whose baptismal sign they were to place on the brows of all men.

Teachers of Christianity have frequently drawn our attention to the intensive nature of the work of Jesus, the frequent occasions when He escaped from the casual crowds to minister to the devoted few. That is perfectly true, but the purpose behind the plan must not be misunderstood. It was not because He prized the few above the rest of mankind. It was not because He thought to confer upon them any special privileges. There are no privileges in the fraternity of Jesus except the privilege of ministering to others. There are no boundaries between the elect and the multitude save the walls within which the vision that all the world needs may be imparted. The method of Jesus is intensive because His vision is extensive. He formed His group of disciples, He founded His Church to multiply His own lips and heart and hands. The Church in that literal sense is to be the body of Christ, the stewards, the soldiers, the builders of the Kingdom of God. The Church of Christ has no worthy meaning at all except in relation to the Kingdom. Her gospel is no secret initiation, no mere individual salvation; it is the message that God's purpose for man is a kingdom, 'a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.'[1]

If we take the writings of Wells, whose genius it is to focus what is vaguely present in the mind of to-day, and who commands the ear of the world as perhaps no other living man, we find that his whole plea is in behalf of 'the Kingdom of God on earth—the thing before us, the close and inevitable destiny of mankind.' But, alas, his vision of God is so blurred, so inadequate, that his passionate plea ends in futility. The God whose Kingdom he seeks to establish is a finite God who fumbles His way through time, as if bewildered in the universe which He did not create and, apparently, cannot control. It is nothing short of tragedy that in a day when men see the Kingdom as the immediate, as well as the ultimate, destiny of humanity, their vision of what God is should be so clouded, leaving them without the sanction and inspiration needed for their supreme enterprise.

Not so the revelation of God by Jesus. He began with God, almighty, all-loving, ever-present, in whom and by whom human life finds fulfilment. He knew that until we are right about God—right with God at the centre—we cannot be right about anything else. Nowadays the phrase 'Kingdom of God' is often enough used to describe some favourite scheme of social or political reform—better houses, higher wages, more wholesome conditions of health, the duty of kindness. But Jesus had in mind something more far-reaching and profound, a vision and policy in which all these things were items of detail. He laid down no programme, and offered no plan for the mending of human society. He knew that so long as the spirit of man is wrong and his inner life dark all plans will go awry. Hence His insight went fathoms deeper than an improved, patched-up society of men. His

[1] G. Jackson, *The Teaching of Jesus*, 83.

[1] S. M. Berry, *The Crucible of Experience*, 273.

remedy was more radical; it was the rule of God in the hearts of men, expressing itself in all our affairs, social, economic, ethical, political. His diagnosis of human ills was so simple that men doubt it. Down below all else—the centre and secret of our sorrow—He saw a practical denial of God, which turns work into toil, beauty into brutality, and the face of the earth into a scene of human hatefulness. Of this deep disease all our sorrows are but symptoms; and Jesus knew that, if this inner atheism is healed, all things lovely and of good report will be added unto us.[1] 'I don't deny, my friends,' wrote Charles Kingsley to the Chartists, 'it is much cheaper and pleasanter to be reformed by the devil than by God; for God will only reform society on the condition of our reforming every man his own self, while the devil is quite ready to help us to mend the laws and the Parliament, earth and heaven, without ever starting such an impertinent and "personal" request as that a man should mend himself.'

¶ We must not forget the lesson of Nathaniel Hawthorne's tale *The World's Holocaust*. Into one great conflagration everything was cast that was supposed in any way to have worked mischief and discord among men. But the devil, who had watched at first in dismay, as if his handiwork was ruined, turned away when all was cast in with a leer of satisfaction as he saw possibilities of the return of all the evils, for he said to himself, 'They have forgotten to throw in one thing—the human heart.' There will never be a regenerate society while men have unregenerate hearts.[2]

¶ 'The character of the aggregate,' says Herbert Spencer, 'is determined by the character of the units.' And he illustrates thus: Suppose a man building with good, square, well-burnt bricks; without the use of mortar he may build a wall of a certain height and stability. But if his bricks are warped and cracked or broken, the wall cannot be of the same height and stability. If, again, instead of bricks he uses cannon-balls then he cannot build a wall at all; at most, something in the form of a pyramid with a square or rectangular base. And if, once more, for cannon-balls we substitute rough, unhewn boulders, no definite stable form is possible. 'The character of the aggregate is determined by the characters of the units.'[3]

[1] J. Fort Newton. [2] R. J. Drummond. [3] George Jackson.

Some seem to think that the advent of the Kingdom of God would mean the annihilation of our civilization—as if the gospel of Christ were a kind of dangerous high explosive. How strange! They are actually afraid of the teaching of the Master, forgetting that to-day, as of old, He comes not to destroy, but to fulfil. Much would be different indeed, but more in spirit than in form, since Jesus was concerned less with the outward organization of society than with its inner principle and motive. Evil, ugliness, and injustice would disappear, but all noble and beautiful things wrought by the human spirit would remain. Jesus saw all that is lovely and true in human life and blessed it as material ready for the building of the kingdom. Youth, love, the marriage-feast, the joy of friendship, the play of little children—'for of such is the kingdom of Heaven'—the nobilities of the home, honest work, music, art—all these are rich in promise. Once He has His way, all good things will be better, all sacred things more sacred. He thought of the Kingdom in terms of life and growth, using the imagery of Nature, and the familiar and lovable things of every day, to make His vision clear. As Markham said:

> We men of earth have here the stuff
> Of Paradise—we have enough!
> We need no other stones to build
> The stairs into the Unfulfilled—
> No other ivory for the doors,
> No other marble for the floors—
> No other cedar for the beam
> And dome of Man's immortal dream.
> Here on the paths of every day,
> Here on the common human way,
> Is all the busy gods would take
> To build a heaven, to mould and make
> New Edens. Ours the task sublime
> To build Eternity in Time!

Every attempt to reconstruct society which leaves out of account the character of the men and women who constitute society is foredoomed to failure.

Our Social Ideal

Acts xxviii. 31.—'Preaching the kingdom of God.'

THERE is no ideal Christian life which is not essentially social. The ideal individual Christian is for one thing a man who is alive to his social

responsibilities, who is as deeply convinced of the importance and duty of seeing to the salvation of the soul of his brother as of seeing to the saving of his own soul.

¶ Wesley taught the early Methodists to sing—

> A charge to keep I have,
> A God to glorify,
> A never-dying soul to save
> And fit it for the sky.

And there are those who seem to have thought that this was the whole of the hymn; but the verse goes on—

> To serve the present age,
> My calling to fulfil;
> O may it all my powers engage
> To do my Master's will!

If nothing else were available to prove the Christian attitude, the supreme emphasis laid on love would be enough. With self so severely repressed, self-love so carefully scrutinized and guarded, what room is there for the worthy play of love in man's heart at all, if man the individual is self-sufficient? The world of inanimate Nature, the lower animals, may stir our emotions, evoke affections which we call love. But what love really means, what it means as it exists in the very nature of the Three-One God, men would have nothing to explain to them had not God set the solitary in families and designed society for man, and man for society. Christianity, therefore, would be seriously defective if it had no social ideal, as well as its ideal for the individual. As a matter of fact, emphasis is laid on the social element in human life in two distinct ways by Christianity, in a narrower way and in a broader way: in a way that regards its own adherents and in a way that reaches out to those beyond and without its pale; as Peter wrote, 'to brotherly kindness add charity, love to all.'

1. The social ideal has a place in the narrower sphere, in the Church. Our Saviour was too well aware of the social instincts of men, which lead them to combine for the accomplishment of common ends, to neglect the mighty force for the advancement of His cause, which was to be found in a strong, compact brotherhood. Still more, the whole spirit of the relationship into which He entered with mankind, and into which He came to bring them with God, so far from being individual, is uniformly social. The man is to be more than a single saint, he is to be a member of a holy family, a citizen of a holy city. If the one distinctive rite of the Christian community, baptism, is pronouncedly individual, reminding men that the way into the fellowship of God is one by one, still even there the medium of the Spirit's activity is normally through one already in union with Christ: He reaches one soul through another. The other rite is an ordinary social meal consecrated to spiritual ends, a meeting of brethren at their Father's table. Heaven itself is social, the general assembly and Church of the first-born, living in united enjoyment of the presence and service of God.

2. There is, however, a much larger social ideal than the Church, and that is the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is an ideal. It is realized wherever and to whatever extent God's will is done on earth as it is done in heaven. As for the relation of the Church to the Kingdom, it might be put in this way. The Church is the association of the citizens of the Kingdom for the establishment of the Kingdom in the world, for the world-wide realization of the ideal which it implies. The Church in this relation is a propaganda, a fighting force: and the Kingdom is what it fights for.

In some ways the Kingdom might be compared to what are called Utopias. Plato has presented his ideal State in his *Republic*. Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* is a specimen of many others. We have modern Utopias in *Looking Backwards* and similar imaginative sketches of Socialism as it would be in practice. But the Kingdom of God is not a Utopia. It is not a sketch of an ideal human society. It is not a theory or a scheme worked out in details. It is simply the name for what would be the resultant condition of mankind if men would give effect in their lives to certain great guiding principles, the holy laws of God, in their relations among themselves.

There is need for the introduction of the Christian spirit which reigns in domestic affairs, into business and politics, the re-enthronement not only of love but of justice as the ruling principles in the prosecution of industry and commerce and in the regulation of national and international affairs.

¶ The present Christianity makes an excellent private Christian, but its endeavours to make an excellent public one go for nothing substantially. . . . He has sound and sturdy private morals, but he has no public ones. . . . Who can persuade the nation and Congress to throw away their present public morals and use none but their private ones henceforth in all their activities, both public and private? . . . There is the field, a grand one, a splendid one, a sublime one, and absolutely unoccupied.[1]

¶ In many ways we are not unlike the Brahman who attended an evangelistic meeting where the Christians were glowingly telling how Christ had saved them. He felt he could stop it, so he got up and said, 'You people say you are saved. So am I. As Christ has saved you, so Krishna has saved me.' The missionary in charge of the meeting was wise, so he said, 'I am very glad to hear that you are saved—very glad indeed. Now we are going down to the outcaste quarters and are going to see what we can do for these poor people. We will sit on their beds and in their houses and will share their lives to help them. Will you join us?' The Brahman thought a moment and then said, 'Well, sahib, I am saved, but I am not saved that far.' Some of our Christianity, like the Brahman, is individually saved, but it is not saved as far as the mind of Christ. It goes only part way. It is not socially applicable.[2]

What is wanted is not what may be called a Christian anarchism, such as Tolstoy seems to contemplate, where the laws of God having been accepted in the individual's heart there is no need for any other. That is to ignore the social organism. But the ideal is to infuse the Spirit of Christ into the links and laws that must bind men together. It is not the setting up of any one form of government or system of employment or method of commerce as alone ideal. Christianity is not committed to any one of these; Christianity meets them all with the demand that they pursue their way along the line of fairness of dealing, generosity of judgment, unselfishness and mutual helpfulness. Its ideal is spiritual; it emphasizes the spirit in which men are to act under any conditions. But if conditions are found to be fatal to the prevalence of the spirit which Christ approves, incompatible with the true welfare of men, that is their condemnation; they must be changed, cost what it may.

3. It may be worth while to note some of the characteristic convictions which will animate a man who has caught a glimpse of the Christian ideal of society in the Kingdom of God, and which he will seek to make operative.

(1) He will be convinced that rights are secondary; duties are primary; and rights rest on duties. For what are rights? They are but opportunities to obey the dictates of duty. A man is born with needs, for the satisfaction of which during many years he is dependent on the loving care of others, society's instant notification to him of his debt to her. As soon as opening intelligence and growing strength permit, society claims repayment of the debt, reminds him of his duty; and the only right he can claim is the right of opportunity to fulfil the calling of his nature, and play his part, and repay his debt. Froude puts it in this way: 'Popular forms are only possible when individual men can govern their own lives on moral principles, and when duty is of more importance than pleasure, and justice than material expediency.'

(2) Again, there will be the conviction that spiritual and not material interests are supreme. In most of the criticisms of the supposed inertness of the Church in reference to things social there is one which is only to the Church's credit; that is, that it will not subordinate the spiritual to the material. It will not grow enthusiastic over schemes that aim only at material betterment. Here the Church is true to its Master. He had no mercy on those who exploited their fellows. His followers had no tolerance for, declined to admit the Christianity of, those who were content to leave the poor, the miserable, the vicious in their degrading surroundings, did nothing either to rescue men from them, or abolish them altogether. But the conviction remains that earthly well-being is a poor substitute for the emancipation of the spirit and the capacity recovered for fellowship with God.

¶ The Assembly of the United Free Church have agreed to alter the moving words of the most solemn of the questions asked a minister at his settlement in a charge, 'Are not zeal for the glory of God, love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and a desire of saving souls, so far as you know

[1] Mark Twain.
[2] E. Stanley Jones, *Christ at the Round Table*, 95.

your own heart, your chief motives for seeking to enter into the office of the Holy Ministry,' into 'a desire for the salvation of men'; and this on the ground, as was explained, that men have bodies as well as souls, and that the Church cannot remain indifferent to physical or economic wrongs. All which, within limits, is excellent. And yet are we not forgetting that, if Christ is a social Reformer like none other, He is greatly more? He is the Saviour. That is His noblest and most worthy name; and the most wonderful thing He does is to change, not our environment only, but ourselves.[1]

(3) Still more, the glimpse of the Kingdom of God brings home the conviction that a neighbour's interests are as sacred as a man's own. Indeed there are words of Christ which state this, and which evolve the emergence of a society Christianized: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' 'And who is my neighbour?' If we read Christ's parable in answer to that question we shall be left inquiring, 'Who is not?' It brings all humanity within its sweep.

(4) The crowning conviction is that ultimately the reconstitution of society can only come about by the influence of religion. That was the result to which after patient study of the course of history Benjamin Kidd came, and which he wrote his two great books to prove. It is a truth which has been pithily expressed in the phrase: 'Society rests not upon science, but upon conscience.'[2]

4. The need of the world to-day emphasizes the necessity of guidance and inspiration in the expression of human relationships. Life is restless and unsettled just at the point where our lives touch the lives of our fellow-men, where the class to which we belong is related to other classes, where our nation comes into contact with neighbour nations. These are the outlines of hard problems which await us, but if they are problems they are also opportunities. Then again, the conditions of the age in which we live have taught us that what men are thinking and feeling in remote corners of the earth may at any time knock at the doors of our own snug little securities. There is no safety for the individual until all human society is guided by the highest laws and obeys the same standard. Something which happens in Berlin, or Paris, or New York, or Tokio to-day may upset all our individual plans and purposes for to-morrow. Humanity needs a new direction, a new vision to knit it together. Men speak of the need of a world State and a League of Nations. By all means let us advance in these wider directions, but we must have the power which alone can make them real, and that power is contained in a world vision, a world religion. It is what humanity needs above everything else. But it is more than that. It is God's supreme purpose. It is, as St Paul said, 'The mystery which has been hidden in the ages that in the fulness of time God might gather together in one all things in Christ.' That is the sure ground of our confidence. The very thing which we see as the deepest need of our age is God's supreme purpose for mankind and the meaning of Christ to the world. Let us take heart again, as we touch this mystery of God's will.

The way is broadening out before our eyes towards its accomplishment. Every worker for this new and greater Kingdom is one with the heart and will of the Eternal. Our own little plans are scattered and fragmentary, but they find their meaning and inspiration in God's great plan. It is this vision for which the Church of Christ prays and lives and works.[1]

Father, let Thy kingdom come,—
Let it come with living power;
Speak at length the final word,
Usher in the triumph hour.

As it came in days of old,
In the deepest hearts of men,
When Thy martyrs died for Thee,
Let it come, O God, again.

Break, triumphant day of God!
Break at last, our hearts to cheer;
Eager souls and holy songs
Wait to hail Thy dawning here.

Empires, temples, sceptres, thrones,
May they all for God be won;
And, in every human heart,
Father, let Thy kingdom come.[2]

[1] A. J. Gossip, *From the Edge of the Crowd*, 201.
[2] R. J. Drummond, *Faith's Certainties*, 298.

[1] S. M. Berry, *The Crucible of Experience*, 277.
[2] John Page Hopps.

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